

INTERIM REPORT to the CHURCHES
 In Preparation for the TWELFTH Synod of the
UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

Convening in 2021, Lord Willing
 To Be Convened by Wellandport United Reformed Church, Wellandport, Ontario

In view of the postponement of the 2020 synod, the Convening Consistory issues this Interim Report to keep the churches informed of matters that were planned but now are postponed until sometime in 2021. All overtures, appeals, and communications submitted will be held over for 2021. Reports of functionaries and committees will not be held over but must be resubmitted by the new deadline (yet to be determined) with any revisions and/or supplemental material they may wish to add to their reports.

I. FUNCTIONARY REPORTS

| | |
|--|----|
| A. Report of the Convening Consistory..... | 3 |
| Appendix 1 – Stated Clerk’s Report | 7 |
| B. Financial Matters | |
| 1. Synod Wheaton 2018 Financial Report | 14 |
| 2. U.S. Treasurer’s Reports | |
| 2018 Letter and Financial Report | 15 |
| 2019 Letter and Financial Report | 21 |
| 3. Canadian & JVA Treasurer’s Reports | |
| 2018 Letter and Reports..... | 27 |
| 2019 Letter and Reports..... | 34 |
| C. Statistician’s Report | 41 |

II. OVERTURES, APPEALS, and COMMUNICATIONS

| | |
|--|----|
| A. Overtures | |
| <i>Classis Central U.S.</i> | |
| None | |
| <i>Classis Eastern U.S.</i> | |
| 1. Amend CO Art. 22 & 47 with References to Church Planting Manuel | 52 |
| 2. Amend CO Art. 48 with Reference to Marriage Affirmations | 53 |
| 3. Add Index of Synodical Decisions to Website | 54 |
| 4. Add Index of Synodical Decisions to Church Order | 55 |
| 5. Amend CO Art. 10 re Dissolution of a Church Plant | 56 |
| 6. Add List of Vacancies to Website | 58 |
| 7. Appoint Committee re. Choral Recordings of TPH Psalms | 58 |
| <i>Classis Michigan</i> | |
| None | |
| <i>Classis Ontario-East</i> | |
| 8. Amend Appendix 4 re Sermon | 60 |
| <i>Classis Pacific Northwest</i> | |
| None | |
| <i>Classis Southwestern Ontario</i> | |
| 9. Amend LS Form 1 re Lord’s Day and Liars | 61 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 10. Amend CO Art. 47 re Seeking Advice | 62 |
| <i>Classis Southwest U.S.</i> | |
| 11. Amend CO Art. 31re Appeals..... | 64 |
| <i>Classis Western Canada</i> | |
| None | |
| <i>Consistory Overture: Covenant Reformed Church, Pella, Iowa</i> | |
| 12. New Missions Committee, Mandate, and Guidelines..... | 66 |
| B. Appeals | |
| Appeal 1 | 74 |
| Appeal 2 | 82 |
| C. Communications | |
| Communication 1 Regarding Appeal 1..... | 88 |
| Communication 2 Regarding Appeal 2..... | 90 |
| Communication 3 Regarding Classical Fraternal Relations | 92 |
| Communication 4 Regarding Ratification of Provisionally Received Churches..... | 94 |
| Communication 5 Regarding Hosting the Next Synod..... | 95 |
| III. COMMITTEE REPORTS | |
| A. Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA)..... | 96 |
| B. Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) | 156 |
| C. Liturgical Forms Committee..... | 179 |
| D. Missions Committee | 180 |
| E. Website Oversight Committee | 248 |
| Appendix A – Webmaster’s Report to Synod..... | 250 |
| F. Oversight Consistory for the Website Oversight Committee | 256 |
| G. Liaison Committee for the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel (PRCC) | 258 |
| H. Standing Committee on Appeals | 261 |
| I. Canadian Board of Directors | 263 |
| J. United States Board of Directors | 266 |
| K. <i>Trinity Psalter Hymnal</i> Joint Venture Board | 268 |

Report of the Convening Consistory to Synod Redeemer 2020

June 2018: The Council of Wellandport URC formed a committee to begin preparations for organizing Synod 2020.

July 2018: The committee held its initial meeting and discussed some of the general needs for Synod and some possible venues. Elder Dick Baarda agreed to take on the role of Chair of the committee.

August 2018: The committee met via skype with Mr. Fred Colvin, Chair of the Oak Glen Convening consistory of Synod Wheaton 2018. Mr. Colvin gave us a broad overview of the requirements for a venue. We were also informed that there would be some excess funds leftover to be sent to us.

September 2018: The Council of Wellandport URC decided on using Redeemer University as a venue for Synod 2020.

October 2018: A lease agreement for use of Redeemer University was signed.

November 2018: Our committee met with URCNA Stated Clerk Rev. Ralph Pontier, who gave us some helpful advice and suggestions on some of the duties that are required of us.

January 2019: It was decided that the name of the upcoming Synod would be Synod Redeemer 2020, to be held on June 8-13. The registration deadline was set for March 31, 2020. Some discussion was had on setting up a website as a long-term, re-usable sight for subsequent Synods. Mrs. Pam Hessels agreed to take on the role of treasurer of our committee. We received approximately \$22,000 in excess funds from Synod Wheaton, as well as lanyards from the Synod Wheaton convening consistory. We agreed to make use of digital hallway signs at Redeemer at an approximate cost of \$300.

February 2019: A "Save the Date" was sent out to the churches via the stated clerk. It was agreed to charge \$300 Cdn per table for exhibitors (\$250 U.S.).

March 2019: We received a request from the US URCNA board to distribute their minutes to the churches via the URCNA Stated Clerk. Our recommendation was to send out a report rather than the minutes.

April 2019: Liability coverage for Synod was reviewed, and a liability policy is to be extended by the current policy holder of Wellandport URC. Correspondence from CERCU was received regarding a request from the CRC executive director to consider engaging in discussions around unresolved conflicts and reconciliation between the URCNA and the CRC. Four recommendations were included in the report. We encouraged CERCU to respond in a positive manner and consider conversation using the recommendations listed.

May 2019: The Acts of Synod were received and re-packaged to be distributed to the various classis of the Federation. A request was received from Reformed Mission Services for permission to distribute a newsletter via the Stated Clerk. The committee recommended that they not distribute their newsletter via the Stated Clerk, but that they distribute it themselves using the emails available via the church website.

June 2019: Contracts were signed for various hotels in the Ancaster area. TD Bank will be used for processing payments for registration.

September 2019: Acquired addresses for the Acts of Synod to be sent to, and the Acts were distributed to the various classis of the federation. A list of questions was developed to be included in the registration forms. Information of date and location of Synod Redeemer 2020 was sent to the URCNA Stated Clerk to be forwarded to NAPARC churches. We were informed by CECCA that they would inform their own delegates of the date and location.

October 2019: Contacted Dr. David Murray and asked if he would be willing to do a presentation to Synod delegates on mental health.

November 2019: A communication was received from the Missions Committee outlining 5 proposals towards creating a broader, classical model for doing missions, and requesting feedback from the churches.

We received a request from the Missions Committee to have 2 evening presentations during Synod. We informed the committee that we would allow them one evening to speak, but not on the mission committee's proposals, as we felt this would give them an advantage that is not normally afforded with other overtures.

An appeal and a communication was received from Elder Mark Vandermolen and Rev. Doug Barnes regarding an overture from Classis Eastern U.S.

December 2019: Established approximate costs of registration for Synod delegates.

January 2020: Sent a communication to the churches via the URCNA Stated Clerk regarding registration details. Reps from both CECCA and CERCUC were contacted and asked to assist in getting fraternal delegates to and from Synod.

February 2020: Finalized some matters pertaining to the website for Synod, and extended the deadline for registration of delegates to April 15. A request was received from the Missions Committee to move their presentation to Tuesday evening in order to generate better discussion for any questions and words of encouragement delegates might have for the missionaries in the following days. This presentation will focus on the reports of specific missionaries with some explanation of the current state of missions in the URCNA. This request was granted.

Recommendations:

1. When we obtained the financial report for Synod Wheaton, it became apparent that, while Synod Wyoming made it mandatory that a financial report be prepared, there were no

guidelines established as to what was to be contained in the report. The report prepared by Synod Wheaton lacked some of the detail that would be helpful in establishing a budget for synod.

The convening Synod committee recommends that a standardized report format be adopted. The report should contain details as to the number of attendees (preferably with the number of delegates / non-delegates indicated), revenue and expense line items with a dollar amount over \$500 given separate line items on the report, and the costs related to CERCU / CECCA guests be separated. A template of what should be included is attached to this report.

Grounds:

- i. A standard report would ensure that the financial information is presented in a consistent basis (allow for better comparison of costs).
 - ii. A template would standardize what is to be included in a financial report (it is not left up to each convening committee's interpretation).
2. The convening Synod committee made the decision to invest money into the establishment of a permanent Synod website that would allow for electronic payment.

The convening Synod committee recommends that the URCNA synod website be continued to be used as a permanent Synod website.

Grounds:

- i. Money will not need to be spent to establish a new website with each succeeding Synod.
 - ii. On-line payment of fees is made more feasible as the programming does not need to be redone with each Synod
3. That the Synod funds be held by the Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) so that the expenses for future synods will be paid (either in the form of advances to the convening consistory or direct payments to vendors) from the JVA bank account (rather than local consistories opening bank accounts, paying for costs, and forwarding the excess to the next consistory).

Grounds:

- i. Synod is a joint activity of the URCNA Federation and fits into the activities of the JVA.
- ii. The JVA is better equipped to exchange money from US to Cdn dollar (and vice versa) and to forward money across the border (accounting for funds going outside Canada after Synod is completed is problematic for Canadian churches)
- iii. The JVA is better suited to claim Canadian government rebates than the local Canadian church (easier for Canadian churches to keep the Synod recordkeeping "off the books" and not claim the rebates to avoid reporting excess funds going outside Canada).
- iv. Future Synods are able to utilize the on-line payment system (better exchange rates can be obtained when exchanging funds; less risk of theft).

- v. EFT allows for payments to be made directly from the JVA bank account; need for all the money to be held locally is not as necessary.
4. That the JVA Treasurer be responsible for preparing the financial report for Synod and ensure any unspent money forwarded to the local consistory is returned to the JVA account.

Grounds:

- i. This follows with the passing of recommendation 3. If the JVA holds the funds, it is reasonable to expect that the JVA treasurer would be responsible for the recordkeeping.

 United Reformed Churches in North America
 Financial Report
 Synod _____
 _____, Treasurer

Beginning cash balance \$ xx,xxx.xx A

INCOME

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Registration fees | # attendees: xxx | \$ xx,xxx.xx |
| Display fees | # displayers: xx | x,xxx.xx |
| Other (specify amounts > \$500): | | x,xxx.xx |
| _____ | | x,xxx.xx |
| _____ | | x,xxx.xx |

TOTAL Income \$ xx,xxx.xx B

EXPENSES

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Meals | | \$ xx,xxx.xx |
| Facility / meeting rooms | | x,xxx.xx |
| Lodging | | xx,xxx.xx |
| CERCU / CECCA guests | # attendees : xx | x,xxx.xx |
| Technology | | x,xxx.xx |
| Transportation | | xxx.xx |
| Insurance | | x,xxx.xx |
| Office / clerical | | x,xxx.xx |
| Other (specify amounts > \$500): | | xxx.xx |
| _____ | | xxx.xx |
| _____ | | xxx.xx |

TOTAL Expenses \$ xx,xxx.xx C

TOTAL INCOME OVER EXPENSES \$ xx,xxx.xx (B-C)

Ending cash balance \$ xx,xxx.xx (A+B-C)

Appendix 1

Stated Clerk's Report to Synod Redeemer 2020

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers,

1. The Work of the Clerk
 - a. The work of the Stated Clerk continues to increase from year to year. For six months a year, it averages about four to five hours a week dealing with email and phone inquiries, announcements, and other correspondence. For the three months before synod and three months after synod, it can average from six to ten hours a week. For comparison, in September 2018, the OPC advertised for the position of “Stated Clerk of the General Assembly” and described it as “averaging 20 hours per week.” We are not there yet, but even now I dread the thought of a full-time pastor trying to add the duties of our stated clerk to his pastoral responsibilities.
 - b. I have answered numerous requests for information and referred numerous emails to the appropriate committees. As of the date of this report (one year and nine months since the last synod), I have saved 2,003 emails dealing with my general duties and over 430 dealing with the preparations for this synod. (My mail program can give me an exact count in a second.) I average 4-5 emails, six days a week, many of which require close attention, research, and a reply. That does not include the ones I trash from advertisers.
 - c. In addition to daily correspondence, my two major tasks are the preparation of the acts of synod for hard copy publication, and the preparation of the agenda for the next synod. I have done this without secretarial help other than that the first clerk of synod gives me a “finished” and “official” copy of the minutes which I don't need to proofread. But I must then reduce it in size to fit a 9-inch by 6-inch page for hard copy publication. Reducing the minutes is fairly easy but reducing the agenda is a tedious and time-consuming task since several pages have multiple columns that sometimes must be completely retyped and/or reformatted. (e.g. financial reports or reports that compare various editions of a text). Previous page breaks have to be removed which sometimes causes unexpected changes in both format and text. Compiling the minutes and agenda, creating an index, and putting it all in one pdf with correct page numbers is a task of forty to eighty hours depending on the size of the agenda and the complexity of the types of pages. It is also a task that requires text editing skills for MSWord and Adobe pdf that not every computer user has. It requires a paid subscription to Adobe for editing features not available in the free version (for which I have been reimbursed).
2. Synod Wheaton 2018 Follow-up
 - a. After Synod Wheaton, I sent out “thank you” letters to various committees and individuals as instructed by the chairman of that synod.
 - b. I informed the churches of the need to vote before December 31, 2018 on ratification of four items: the decision to enter Phase 2 with the Evangelical and Presbyterian Church of England and Wales, and to ratify three changes to the Church Order. All 112 churches voted (although I had to pester a few to

- get their vote on time). The Phase 2 ratification was unanimous. The secretary of CECCA informed the EPCEW. The CO items all received far more than the two-thirds majority required. Ballots were submitted electronically. I made hard copies and saved them.
- c. I updated the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* with the 10 changes made by Synod Wheaton and posted the new edition to the website.
 - d. I updated the *Church Order*, adding the three amended articles after ratification and adding Appendix 7 *Guidelines for Appeals* and Appendix 8 *Pastoral Advice Regarding Membership Departures*.
 - e. I formatted and posted on the website the *Marriage Affirmations*. I sent copies to NAPARC and the PRCC as instructed.
 - f. I arranged for the publication of the *Acts of Synod Wheaton 2018* in hard copy. According to established practice, the distribution of the printed Acts was the responsibility of the next convening consistory. They sent them to each classis at the address of the classis' next venue. This worked well in most cases. The Acts were printed and sent to the convening consistory 11 months after synod (shipped May 5, 2019). However, the minutes were available for download from the website one month after synod. The Acts could have been ready six weeks sooner if I had not waited until they were ready for the printer before taking orders. That was a mistake since we could not start printing until we knew how many we needed. If given another opportunity, I'll take orders early so that does not hold up the process. The editing process was slowed by the fact that soon after receiving the official minutes from the First Clerk, I accepted three pastoral interim positions, each lasting about two months with short breaks between them.
3. Ratification of Churches Received Provisionally
 - a. Two churches have been received provisionally by Classis Pacific NW by CO Art. 32. They are:
 - Medford, Oregon – Cornerstone Church
 - Silverdale, Washington – Anchor of Hope Reformed Church
 - b. The more recent precedents for ratifying such provisional acceptance is to do so as the first order of business after the election of officers and before the adoption of the provisional agenda (cf. *Acts of Synod Nyack, 2012*, Art. 7; *Acts of Synod Wyoming 2016*, Art. 8. However, it was done by the chairman pro tem before the election of officers in 2010.)
 4. Ministerial News Service
 - a. The ministerial news feed on the public side of the website, authorized by Synod 2016, is working well. Because of new council members coming on board every year, I continue to have to remind some consistories of it and give them instruction.
 - b. Regarding the lists of ministers, candidates, and licentiates that are found on the website, these lists are generated automatically by the information each church supplies when it updates its own profile in the Admin section of the website. Our statistician and webmaster have helped greatly in keeping these lists up to date.

5. Stated Clerk Archives

- a. After assuming the office of Stated Clerk, I received four boxes of material from the previous clerk.
- b. Two boxes contained file folders for a filing cabinet. It appears that hard copy paper files were filed regularly until 2004, after which the stated clerks saved very little hard copy files.
- c. The other two boxes (now three boxes) contain copies of minutes of the broader assemblies of various churches together with some yearbooks and directories. I took the following inventory:

ARPC

Standards of the ARPC (paperback), and Minutes of Synod: 1998 (also available at <http://arpchurch.org/governing-documents/>).

CanRC

The *Yearbook* for 1992, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2008, 2009. Much more current information on the Canadian and American Reformed Churches is available at their website: <https://canrc.org>. (Old volumes of yearbooks may be of use for historical research.) There is also a copy of the *Acts of the General Synod Dunnville 2016* (also available online at <https://canrc.org/documents/8308>).

FRCNA

Acts of Synod: 1997 (also available at <http://frcna.org/resources/acts-of-synod>).

ICRC

Proceedings of the Constituent Assembly of the ICRC: 1993, 2001 (also available at <https://www.icrconline.com/general>). Mission Committee Field Survey: 2013.

OCRC

Minutes of the OCRC synods: 1999, 2001

OPC

The *Minutes of the General Assembly and Yearbook*: 1996, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 (also available at <https://opcgaminutes.org>).

PCA

Minutes of the General Assembly: 1998, 2001, 2002, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2018. (Also available at <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/ga/index.html#a46>.
Minutes of the General Assembly on CD's: 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015. Also the *PCA Yearbook* for 2009, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017. Each yearbook has two 1.5-inch-thick paperback volumes. The first volume of each year has the General Assembly Directory, the Presbytery Directory, the Church Directory, and Statistical Reports. The second volume has the Ministerial Directory. The Church Directory and Ministerial Directory are available for free online. The 2019 two-volume edition sells in the PCA online bookstore for \$71.50. Editions from the 1980's are cheaper. In between there is nothing available online that I can find.

RCNZ

Acts of Synod: 2011, 2014, 2016, 2017 (also available at <https://rcnz.org.nz/synodical/>). *Yearbook* of the RCNZ: 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015.

RCUS

The synodical *Abstract of the Minutes*: 1984, 1997, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 (also available at <http://www.rcus.org/resources/downloads/synodical-abstracts/>).

RPCNA

The RPCNA Constitution in a ring binder (also available at <https://rpcna.org/history/constitution.pdf>), the Standards of the RPCNA, the Minutes and Yearbook: 1999, 2002 (also available at <http://www.rparchives.org/synod.html>).

Except for the minutes of the OCRC, almost all of the above materials are available for free online. I see no reason to continue to store them or ship them to the next stated clerk for storage.

I also have in storage the following URCNA bound, paperback volumes:

Acts of Synod 1996-1999 (1 copy)

Acts of Synod 2001 (1 copy)

Acts of Synod 2012 (16 copies)

Acts of Synod 2014 (11 copies)

Acts of Synod 2016 (11 copies)

Acts of Synod 2018 (3 copies)

The URCNA directory: 1993, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001.

I believe that the URCNA volumes (*Acts* and directories) should be kept in the Stated Clerk's archives and passed on to future clerks. Some extra copies of the *Acts* could be sold.

- d. I seek the advice of synod regarding the disposition of ecumenical, hard copy volumes that are also available for free in digital format.

6. Church Order and Pastoral Advice Discrepancy

It was brought to my attention that there is a discrepancy in wording between the Church Order and the Pastoral Advice on the procedure for erasing a membership. CO Art. 64 stipulates that a consistory "may, with concurring advice, erase . . ." while the Pastoral Advice, item 4 says that "The consistory should seek the advice of classis before acting to erase a membership." The Pastoral Advice does not require "concurring" advice before the consistory may proceed to erase, only that it asks for advice. The CO requires that the consistory should not erase unless the classis concurs. The Pastoral Advice implies that the consistory could erase regardless of whether the classis concurs, just so long as the consistory asked. I polled the majority of the former members of the Membership Departures Committee to see if they thought this needed correction (perhaps by way of overture from a consistory). They agreed that no change was needed but that any

who might question the matter should recognize that the Church Order wording is the final word in the matter and corrects any improper inference of the Advice.

7. Error in Footnote

It was brought to my attention that footnote #1 in Appendix 8 of the CO has a wrong page number in it (page 31 should be page 39). I have corrected the master copy and the change will appear when a new edition of the CO is published.

8. Agenda Page Numbers

It was brought to my attention that there is a problem when the minutes of synod make reference to page numbers in the agenda for synod. When the agenda is printed with the *Acts* after synod, it is reformatted, and the page numbers are different than the original agenda published as a pdf before the synod. Since the original agenda is not available on the public website after the *Acts* are available, when someone reads the minutes and sees a reference to page numbers in the agenda, those page numbers do not correspond to the only agenda then available on the website. This can be easily remedied by advisory committee secretaries and synodical clerks making more specific references to agenda materials, using the outline divisions of most agenda materials or by quoting agenda material rather than merely referring to a page number as the only reference.

9. Review of the Regulations for Synodical Procedure

The Stated Clerk is required by the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 4.5.4.k to:

Submit a written report of his work to Synod, as part of the written report of the convening consistory. This report may include proposed changes to the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* to bring them into conformity with prior synodical decisions and practices and shall be included in the Provisional Agenda. Any such proposed conforming changes must be supported by citation to the prior decision or practice.”

I bring the following two matters to synod’s attention:

a. Synod Appoints Committee Chairman and Reporter

Regulations for Synodical Procedure, 5.1.2 states that “Synod shall appoint the chairman and reporter of each committee.” This appears in the *Regulations* as part of the general regulations for all committees. The *Regulations* then name four kinds of committees: *ad hoc*, advisory, standing, and study. However, synod does not appoint the chairman and reporter of those standing committees whose membership is also appointed in part or in whole by classes (e.g. *Acts of Synod 2018*, Art. 64.3A where synod only appointed a convener for a committee of classical appointees). The fact that synod does not appoint the chairman and reporter for all committees may have led to confusion in 2016 when synod, contrary to 5.1.2, did not appoint a chairman and reporter for a study committee (*Acts of Synod 2016*, Art. 70.3) but only appointed a convener even though the entire committee was

appointed by synod. Synod did follow 5.1.2 in 2014, appointing a chairman and reporter for a study committee, *Acts of Synod 2014*, Art. 61.2.

RECOMMENDATION: That Regulations 5.1.2 be amended to read, “When synod creates a committee made up entirely of synodical appointees, synod shall appoint a chairman and reporter. When synod creates a committee that includes classical appointees, synod shall appoint a convener.”

Grounds:

1. This will eliminate any confusion regarding whether synod should merely appoint a convener or whether synod should appoint a chairman and reporter.
2. This is consistent with past practice (with one unexplained exception).
3. There is wisdom in synod appointing a chairman and reporter for synodical committees where it appoints all the members. It requires the synodical advisory committee (which recommends) and synod (which appoints) to give attention to choosing men who are gifted in leadership, scholarship, writing, word processing, and other necessary skills for the committee’s work. It also eliminates any tension within the committee regarding choosing its own leadership.
4. *Regulation 4.5.4.k* gives the stated clerk authority to propose changes to the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* to bring them into conformity with past decisions or practices.

- b. Sending Acts of Synod to churches with whom we have ecumenical relations.

The last synod adopted the following, “That Synod declare that we should discontinue sending the Acts of Synod books to the churches with which we have ecumenical relations. Rather we will send the Acts of Synod in a digital format.” *Acts of Synod 2018*, Art. 28.4.

RECOMMENDATION: That synod amend Regulation 4.5.4.e. It currently reads: “Prepare and distribute the *Acts of Synod*. At federation expense, one copy shall be sent to each federation with whom the United Reformed Churches are engaged in any ecumenical relations or contact. All other copies shall be purchased by those who order them.” The recommended amendment would make it read (additions underlined, deletions in strike-through): “Prepare and distribute the *Acts of Synod* in hard copy and digital form. ~~At federation expense~~, One digital copy shall be sent to each federation with whom the United Reformed Churches are engaged in any ecumenical relations or contact. Hard ~~All other~~ copies shall be purchased by those who order them.

Grounds:

1. This will conform the *Regulations* to the last synod’s action.
2. The removal of the words “At federation expense” will remove the implication that a hard copy is the expected method of sending the Acts to other churches.
3. The inclusion of the word “digital” will make the matter clear.
4. Amending the rule will preserve the decision of the last synod for future generations so it is not forgotten.

5. *Regulation 4.5.4.k* gives the stated clerk authority to propose changes to the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* to bring them into conformity with past decisions or practices.

10. Page n of x

The convening consistory of Synod Wheaton 2018 suggested to me after synod that they would like to see the addition of “Page n of x” as a footer on each of the three advisory committee reporting templates found in Appendix C of the *Regulations*. I don’t believe I have the authority to recommend such an amendment since there is no past decision or practice of synod to which I could appeal. But I do believe the chairman of this synod could direct the advisory committees to include such a footer on their reports for the sake of clarity. Then, at the following synod, the stated clerk could recommend the amendment on the basis of the past practice of synod.

11. Convening the Next Synod

On February 21, 2020, I received an email from the Mr. James Lund, clerk of the Escondido URC stating that they the Escondido church is willing to host the next synod, which, at the time of the offer, was tentatively set for 2022.

12. Reappointment

I was elected Alternate Stated Clerk by Synod Wyoming, 2016 and assumed the Stated Clerk’s position a few weeks later. I was elected a second time by Synod Wheaton 2018. I am willing to serve again at synod’s pleasure.

Respectfully submitted, your servant,
Ralph A. Pontier
URCNA Stated Clerk

**Synod Wheaton 2018 Financial Statement
December 31, 2018**

Mr. Tim Boer CPA
Treasurer Synod Wheaton 2018
Oak Glen United Reformed Church, Lansing, Illinois

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Beginning Cash Balance - 9/30/16 | | \$ 17,860.73 |
| Income | | |
| Delegates | 92,500.00 | |
| Observers | 13,515.00 | |
| Displayers | <u>1,500.00</u> | |
| Total Income | | <u>107,515.00</u> |
| Expenses | | |
| Lodging | 36,720.00 | |
| Meeting rooms | 12,500.00 | |
| Meals (less reimbursements) | 32,834.79 | |
| Snacks | 5,422.61 | |
| Custodial | 336.00 | |
| Golf carts | 730.00 | |
| Technology and website | 6,698.25 | |
| Bank and conversion charges | 2,017.95 | |
| Office and administrative | <u>5,843.26</u> | |
| Total Expenses | | <u>103,102.86</u> |
| Expenses over Income | | <u>4,412.14</u> |
| Ending Cash Balance - 12/31/18 | | <u><u>\$ 22,272.87</u></u> |

United Reformed Churches in North America

Robert D. Huisjen, US URCNA Treasurer
8443 Farview Dr SE
Byron Center, Michigan, 49315

March 9, 2019

To: Pastors, Elders, and Deacons of URCNA Member Churches
From: US URCNA Treasurer

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving the Lord as the US Treasurer during 2018. The purpose of this letter is to provide some observations and information relative to the finances of URCNA as well as summarize the US URCNA's finances for last year.

As you can see on the attached financial report, total income for the year for the general fund was \$113,030 (compared to \$108,103 in 2017) and total expenses were \$111,328 (compared to \$88,136 in 2017) which resulted in income in excess of expenses in the amount of \$1,702 (compared to \$19,967 in 2017). As of the date of this report we have received \$639.03 in deposits subsequent to year end which were for 2018 askings but reported as income in the 1st quarter of 2019 since that is when they were received.

The Pastors and Elders who attended Synod Wheaton 2018 approved a budget totaling \$229,996 (US Share of \$137,941) for the calendar year 2019. 2019 Askings were increased to **\$34.14** per family from the 2018 amount of \$30.43 per family. For the upcoming calendar year, please continue to plan your Askings accordingly.

OBSERVATIONS

1. According to the 2017 directory, there are currently 80 US churches of which 74 are organized churches and 6 are church plants.
2. Classical Dues are not the same as the Synodical "Askings". Any fees that are due to a particular classis must be paid to that Classis Treasurer. Any Synodical "Askings" must be paid to the US (or Canadian) Treasurer. These are separate amounts that are due. Classis will not forward a church's "Askings" to me.
3. When seeking reimbursement for work done on a committee, Synod 2012 implemented that all committee expenses be paid directly by the Joint Venture. Continue to send me the reimbursement form and I will forward it in a timely manner to the Joint Venture treasurer. Committee chairman have been provided with revised reimbursement forms.

STATISTICS

This below chart, very simply, indicates the historical percentage of member churches that did not provide any Askings. Organizing churches were omitted from the calculation.

| Year | Church Non-Participation |
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| 2007 | 26% |
| 2008 | 25% |
| 2009 | 23% |
| 2010 | 27% |
| 2011 | 24% |
| 2012 | 7% |
| 2013 | 10% |
| 2014 | 8% |
| 2015 | 7% |
| 2016 | 8% |
| 2017 | 9% |
| 2018 | 9% |

This chart, very simply, indicates the number (not percentage) of US churches that took a collection for the Hymnal Fund.

| Year | Church Participation |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 2003 | 7 |
| 2004 | 7 |
| 2005 | 10 |
| 2006 | 7 |
| 2007 | 10 |
| 2008 | 9 |
| 2009 | 8 |
| 2010 | 4 |
| 2011 | 2 |
| 2012 | 2 |
| 2013 | 6 |
| 2014 | 6 |
| 2015 | 5 |
| 2016 | 6 |
| 2017 | 7 |
| 2018 | 6 |

ASKINGS

URCNA “Askings” equals “Suggested Donation”. Beginning in 2019, the askings donation was adjusted to \$34.14 per family with the Treasurers (US and Canada) reviewing annually the recommended askings per family for the following year. This money is used for the ongoing activity of URCNA. Some churches choose to take a free-will offering instead of using the formula. Each member church has a responsibility to participate, in whatever way, in the overall ministry of URCNA.

It has been suggested that many member churches do not remember about the “Askings” from year to year because of the yearly changes in the council. Beginning in 2014 the treasurers started to send out reminder “statements” reminding the churches of their recommended

“Askings”. Please inform your deacons and have last year’s treasurer remind this year’s treasure about “Askings”.

Please make your check payable to URCNA and send the check to Robert D. Huisjen, 8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315. Canadian churches MUST send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

PSALTER HYMNAL FUND

The first resolution from Report 3, from the Psalter Hymnal committee, that was adopted by Synod 2001 was “That synod establish a fund to finance the cost of producing the new Psalter Hymnal.” The second resolution that was adopted from the Psalter Hymnal committee states “That synod request churches to contribute to that fund by suggesting that free-will offerings be collected for this cause until the new Psalter Hymnal is completed.” The new Trinity Psalter Hymnal was completed and approved at Synod Wheaton 2018.

A 50/50 Joint Venture agreement was put in place between the URCNA - US and the OPC. There is a fund balance being held by the OPC for future printings of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal and also for a potential digital edition. The current cash value of the URCNA - US interest in the JVA is \$106,976.84 as of 12/31/18.

WEB SITE FUND

Article 88 of Synod 2004 directed the treasurers of US and Canada to set up funds for the URCNA Web Site. A separate fund has been established by the US Treasurer. Article 84 B of Synod 2005 states: “That the initial funding of the web site be through equal contributions from each classis in the amount of \$500 (USD) by December 31, 2004 and \$500 (USD) annually thereafter payable on or before the calendar year end. The treasurers of the URCNA US and Canadian corporations shall set up and jointly manage this fund.” Synod 2007 modified that amount to \$200 per classis. **Synod 2010 modified that amount to \$100 per classis.** For those churches that are responsible for the classis treasurers, please inform your classical treasurer to mail the **\$100** check payable to URCNA-Web Fund to Robert D. Huisjen, 8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315. Canadian churches MUST send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

ENCLOSURES

Synod Wheaton 2018 developed a budget for 2019 and 2020 in order to provide information on the ongoing activities.

The following pages contain the unaudited End-Of-Year Report for 2018. An audit will be completed for both years 2018 and 2019 prior to 2020 synod. In addition, guidelines for reimbursement are also provided. The reimbursement guidelines are intended to adhere to the guidelines defined by the U.S. Government.

INCOMING MAIL

All mail for the US Treasurer should be sent to the address at the bottom of the letter. This is the best method for a timely response.

CHECKS

Please make all “askings” checks payable to “URCNA”.

Please make all Hymnal Fund checks payable to “URCNA – Hymnal Fund”

For Classis Treasurers, please make all Web Site Fund checks payable to “URCNA – Web Fund”

REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES

All reimbursement requests must be submitted to the committee chairman for approval prior to being sent to the Treasurer for reimbursement. The goal is to keep the process from being complicated while providing the chairman knowledge of what is being spent. To reduce the amount of time between submittals and reimbursement, once the committee chair has approved the expense, he should mail the reimbursement request directly to the appropriate Treasurer. Attached to this document is a copy of a Synodical Expense Reimbursement Form.

1. Receipts must be presented to the Committee Head who will approve the receipts and send them to either the Canadian or US Treasurer, depending on if the member has a Canadian or US address.
2. When possible, provide actual receipts. (Fax or scanned copies are acceptable. Just make sure the information being faxed is legible.)
3. For airline travel, provide the last portion of the ticket, which contains the entire round-trip information. For those who get E-tickets, the cost of the ticket will not be printed. In addition to that ticket, please provide some sort of receipt from the travel agency or, as a last resort, a photocopy of the bankcard statement with the ticket charge circled. Please do not send boarding passes. You may keep them as a souvenir of your trip.
4. If a receipt has items that are personal, send a photocopy of the receipt and circle the reimbursable items.
5. Mileage will be reimbursed at the IRS rate, which, for 2019, has increased to **58** cents per mile, up from 54.5 cents per mile in 2018. Gasoline is not reimbursed when mileage is submitted.
6. Meals will be reimbursed.
7. Please also submit receipts for meals.
8. If somebody pays for a group meal, that receipt must be submitted.
9. When staying at a hotel, sharing a room is not a requirement.
10. Please indicate which URCNA committee is being represented when requesting a reimbursement so that it can be properly documented.

The goal is to get a reimbursement check out as soon as possible, so if additional information is needed, it will be requested when the reimbursement check is sent. The process is working well and will continue to be modified, as needed.

Thank for your attention to these financial items. Serving the Lord together,
Robert D. Huisjen, U.S. Treasurer, URCNA
8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315
Home: 616-554-0051, Fax: 616-698-0900, E-Mail: bob@firstcompanies.com

UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

Robert Huisjen, US URCNA Treasurer

8443 Farview Dr. SE

Byron Center, MI 49315

Phone 616-588-4113 (Day) 616-554-0051 (Evening)

Email Address: bob@firstcompanies.com

Financial Report for 4th Qtr. and Year Ended December 31, 2018

| | Avg. Annual Budget - US | Avg. Annual Budget - US | 4th Qtr. Actual | YTD Actual |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| BEGINNING CASH BALANCE – 1/1/18 (General Fund) | | | | \$89,682.93 |
| INCOME | | | | |
| Contributions / Askings | | | \$46,896.82 | \$110,865.97 |
| Contributions / Askings (2017) | | | | \$2,014.98 |
| Interest | | | \$59.14 | \$149.40 |
| Total Income | | | \$46,955.96 | \$113,030.35 |
| EXPENSES | | | | |
| | <u>2017</u> | <u>2018</u> | | |
| Accounting / Government Filing | \$25.00 | \$25.00 | | \$20.00 |
| Bank Fees | \$26.00 | \$26.00 | | |
| Appeals | \$1,950.00 | \$1,950.00 | | |
| CECCA (1) | \$4,875.00 | \$4,875.00 | | \$4,966.48 |
| CERCU (2) | \$6,500.00 | \$6,500.00 | \$3,642.19 | \$6,993.45 |
| Clerk | \$2,600.00 | \$2,600.00 | \$1,300.00 | \$3,250.00 |
| Doctrinal Study Committee | | | | |
| Dues | | | | |
| NAPARC | \$455.00 | \$455.00 | \$650.00 | \$1,300.00 |
| ICRC | \$1,625.00 | \$1,625.00 | | \$1,418.63 |
| PRCC/MNA(dues) (3) (5) | \$663.00 | \$845.00 | \$585.00 | \$585.00 |
| ICRC Travel | | | | |
| Missions Coordinator | \$70,457.50 | \$70,700.00 | \$17,645.31 | \$64,043.60 |
| Mission Committee | \$9,750.00 | \$9,750.00 | \$1,808.74 | \$8,841.83 |
| PRCC Liaison | \$325.00 | \$325.00 | | |
| Postage / Supplies | \$50.00 | \$50.00 | \$164.22 | \$169.57 |
| Acts of Synod plus shipping | \$162.50 | \$0.00 | | |
| Directors and Liability Insurance | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | | \$898.00 |
| Song Book Committee | \$3,250.00 | \$3,250.00 | | \$1,416.99 |
| Liturgical Forms Committee | \$5,850.00 | \$5,850.00 | | \$2,758.99 |
| Membership Departure | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | | |
| Emeritation/ Retirement Committee | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | | |
| Synod (Functionaries to attend) (4) | \$0.00 | \$1,300.00 | | \$1,469.14 |
| Treasurer - US (6) | \$4,000.00 | \$4,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$4,000.00 |
| Treasurer - Joint Venture (6) | \$2,600.00 | \$2,600.00 | \$1,848.09 | \$4,734.34 |
| Statistician Honorarium | | | \$805.39 | \$805.39 |
| Webmaster Honorarium (6) | \$3,575.00 | \$3,375.00 | \$1,462.50 | \$3,656.25 |
| Total Expenses | \$119,739.00 | \$121,101.00 | \$30,911.44 | \$111,327.66 |
| TOTAL INCOME OVER EXPENSES | | | \$16,044.52 | \$1,702.69 |
| ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/18 (General Fund) | | | | <u>\$91,385.62(7)</u> |

| | 4th Qtr Actual | YTD Actual |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/18 (Hymnal Fund) | | \$8,654.11 |
| Reimbursement from songbook sale | | \$71,674.63 |
| Expenses | | |
| Interest | | \$0.00 |
| ENDING CASH BALANCE – 12/31/18 (Hymnal Fund) | | <u>\$80,328.74</u> |
| Beginning Cash Balance 1/1/18 (Web Fund) | | \$4,657.33 |
| Contributions/Askings | \$100.00 | \$877.00 |
| Web Maintenance | 797.23 | \$1,501.09 |
| Interest | | |
| ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/18 (Web Fund) | | <u>\$4,033.24</u> |
| TOTAL CASH BALANCE - 12/31/18 (All Funds) | | <u>\$175,747.60</u> |
| Cash Value of Interest in Trinity Psalter Hymnal JVA | | <u>\$106,976.84</u> (8) |

General Fund Notes

1. CECCA = Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
2. CERCU = Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
3. PRJC = Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel
4. URCNA General Fund pays expenses for Synodical Functionaries as approved by convening council.
5. MNA is the Dues paid, set by the number of URCNA Chaplains, as part of PRJC
6. Synod London established honorariums for the treasurers and the Web Master. US and Canadian treasurers are paid fully by their respective countries and the JVA Treasurer and Web Master are paid jointly based on the 65/35 split.
7. \$15,521.21 of the general fund balance has been invested in a short-term cd
8. The JVA is a separate entity from the URCNA that we maintain a 50% stake in. These funds are currently being held in anticipation of a future printing of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal
9. Statistician Honorarium was added to the budget at Synod 2019

United Reformed Churches in North America

Robert D. Huisjen, US URCNA Treasurer
8443 Farview Dr SE
Byron Center, Michigan, 49315

March 23, 2020

To: Pastors, Elders, and Deacons of URCNA Member Churches
From: US URCNA Treasurer

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving the Lord as the US Treasurer during 2019. The purpose of this letter is to provide some observations and information relative to the finances of URCNA as well as summarize the US URCNA's finances for last year.

As you can see on the attached financial report, total income for the year for the general fund was \$111,259 (compared to \$113,030 in 2018) and total expenses were \$113,663 (compared to \$111,328 in 2018) which resulted in expenses in excess of income in the amount of \$2,404 (compared to \$1,702 surplus in 2018). As of the date of this report we have received \$1,234 in deposits subsequent to year end which were for 2019 askings but reported as income in the 1st quarter of 2020 since that is when they were received.

The Pastors and Elders who attended Synod Wheaton 2018 approved a budget totaling \$236,508 (US Share of \$141,835) for the calendar year 2020. 2020 Askings were increased to **\$35.11** per family from the 2019 amount of \$34.14 per family. For the upcoming calendar year, please continue to plan your Askings accordingly.

OBSERVATIONS

1. According to the 2019 directory, there are currently 84 churches.
2. Classical Dues are not the same as the Synodical "Askings". Any fees that are due to a particular classis must be paid to that Classis Treasurer. Any Synodical "Askings" must be paid to the US (or Canadian) Treasurer. These are separate amounts that are due. Classis will not forward a church's "Askings" to me.
3. When seeking reimbursement for work done on a committee, Synod 2012 implemented that all committee expenses be paid directly by the Joint Venture. Continue to send me the reimbursement form and I will forward it in a timely manner to the Joint Venture treasurer. Committee chairman have been provided with revised reimbursement forms.

STATISTICS

This below chart, very simply, indicates the historical percentage of member churches that did not provide any Askings. Organizing churches were omitted from the calculation.

| Year | Church Non-Participation |
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| 2007 | 26% |
| 2008 | 25% |
| 2009 | 23% |
| 2010 | 27% |
| 2011 | 24% |
| 2012 | 7% |
| 2013 | 10% |
| 2014 | 8% |
| 2015 | 7% |
| 2016 | 8% |
| 2017 | 9% |
| 2018 | 9% |
| 2019 | 8% |

This chart, very simply, indicates the number (not percentage) of US churches that took a collection for the Hymnal Fund.

| Year | Church Participation |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 2003 | 7 |
| 2004 | 7 |
| 2005 | 10 |
| 2006 | 7 |
| 2007 | 10 |
| 2008 | 9 |
| 2009 | 8 |
| 2010 | 4 |
| 2011 | 2 |
| 2012 | 2 |
| 2013 | 6 |
| 2014 | 6 |
| 2015 | 5 |
| 2016 | 6 |
| 2017 | 7 |
| 2018 | 6 |
| 2019 | 7 |

ASKINGS

URCNA “Askings” equals “Suggested Donation”. Beginning in 2020, the askings donation was adjusted to \$35.11 per family with the Treasurers (US and Canada) reviewing annually the recommended askings per family for the following year. This money is used for the ongoing activity of URCNA. Some churches choose to take a free-will offering instead of using the formula. Each member church has a responsibility to participate, in whatever way, in the overall ministry of URCNA.

It has been suggested that many member churches do not remember about the “Askings” from year to

year because of the yearly changes in the council. Beginning in 2014 the treasurers started to send out reminder “statements” reminding the churches of their recommended “Askings”. Please inform your deacons and have last year’s treasurer remind this year’s treasurer about “Askings”.

Please make your check payable to URCNA and send the check c/o Robert Huisjen, 8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315. Canadian churches MUST send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

PSALTER HYMNAL FUND

The new Trinity Psalter Hymnal was completed and approved at Synod Wheaton 2018.

A 50/50 Joint Venture agreement was put in place between the URCNA - US and the OPC. There is a fund balance being held by the OPC for future printings of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal and also for a potential digital edition. The current cash value of the URCNA - US interest in the JVA is \$159,608.69 as of 2/29/2020, of which \$45,000 is reserved for printing, \$12,000 for digital development, and \$37,500 for royalty reserves.

WEB SITE FUND

Article 88 of Synod 2004 directed the treasurers of US and Canada to set up funds for the URCNA Web Site. A separate fund has been established by the US Treasurer. Article 84 B of Synod 2005 states: “That the initial funding of the web site be through equal contributions from each classis in the amount of \$500 (USD) by December 31, 2004 and \$500 (USD) annually thereafter payable on or before the calendar year end. The treasurers of the URCNA US and Canadian corporations shall set up and jointly manage this fund.” Synod 2007 modified that amount to \$200 per classis. **Synod 2010 modified that amount to \$100 per classis.** For those churches that are responsible for the classis treasurers, please inform your classical treasurer to mail the **\$100** check payable to URCNA-Web Fund to Robert D. Huisjen, 8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315. Canadian churches MUST send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

ENCLOSURES

Synod Wheaton 2018 developed a budget for 2019 and 2020 in order to provide information on the ongoing activities.

The following pages contain the unaudited End-Of-Year Report for 2019. An audit will be completed for both years 2018 and 2019 prior to synod. An audit was scheduled to be completed but was cancelled due the current pandemic. In addition, guidelines for reimbursement are also provided. The reimbursement guidelines are intended to adhere to the guidelines defined by the U.S. Government.

INCOMING MAIL

All mail for the US Treasurer should be sent to the address at the bottom of the letter. This is the best method for a timely response.

CHECKS

Please make all “askings” checks payable to “URCNA”.

Please make all Hymnal Fund checks payable to “URCNA – Hymnal Fund”

For Classis Treasurers, please make all Web Site Fund checks payable to “URCNA – Web Fund”

REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES

All reimbursement requests must be submitted to the committee chairman for approval prior to being sent to the Treasurer for reimbursement. The goal is to keep the process from being complicated while providing the chairman knowledge of what is being spent. To reduce the amount of time between submittals and reimbursement, once the committee chair has approved the expense, he should mail the reimbursement request directly to the appropriate Treasurer. Attached to this document is a copy of a Synodical Expense Reimbursement Form.

1. Receipts must be presented to the Committee Head who will approve the receipts and send them to either the Canadian or US Treasurer, depending on if the member has a Canadian or US address.
2. When possible, provide actual receipts. (Fax or scanned copies are acceptable. Just make sure the information being faxed is legible.)
3. For airline travel, provide the last portion of the ticket, which contains the entire round-trip information. For those who get E-tickets, the cost of the ticket will not be printed. In addition to that ticket, please provide some sort of receipt from the travel agency or, as a last resort, a photocopy of the bankcard statement with the ticket charge circled. Please do not send boarding passes. You may keep them as a souvenir of your trip.
4. If a receipt has items that are personal, send a photocopy of the receipt and circle the reimbursable items.
5. Mileage will be reimbursed at the IRS rate, which, for 2020, has decreased to **57.5** cents per mile, down from 58.0 cents per mile in 2019. Gasoline is not reimbursed when mileage is submitted.
6. Meals will be reimbursed.
7. Please also submit receipts for meals.
8. If somebody pays for a group meal, that receipt must be submitted.
9. When staying at a hotel, sharing a room is not a requirement.
10. Please indicate which URCNA committee is being represented when requesting a reimbursement so that it can be properly documented.

The goal is to get a reimbursement check out as soon as possible, so if additional information is needed, it will be requested when the reimbursement check is sent. The process is working well and will continue to be modified, as needed.

Thank for your attention to these financial items.

Serving the Lord together,
Robert D. Huisjen
U.S. Treasurer, URCNA
8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315
Home: 616-554-0051, Fax: 616-698-0900, E-Mail: bob@firstcompanies.com

UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

Robert Huisjen, US URCNA Treasurer
 8443 Farview Dr. SE
 Byron Center, MI 49315
 Phone 616-588-4113 (Day) 616-554-0051 (Evening)
 Email Address: bob@firstcompanies.com

Financial Report for 4th Qtr and Year Ended December 31, 2019

| | Avg. Annual Budget - US | Avg. Annual Budget - US | 4th Qtr Actual | YTD Actual |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| .1 | | | | |
| BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/19 (General Fund) | | | | \$91,385.62 |
| INCOME | | | | |
| Contributions / Askings | | | \$50,363.50 | \$110,862.98 |
| Contributions / Askings (2018) | | | | |
| Interest | | | <u>\$118.34</u> | <u>\$396.26</u> |
| Total Income | | | <u>\$50,481.84</u> | <u>\$111,259.24</u> |
| EXPENSES | | | | |
| | 2018 | 2019 | | |
| Accounting / Government Filing | \$25.00 | \$20.00 | \$0.00 | \$20.00 |
| Bank Fees | \$26.00 | \$26.00 | | |
| Appeals | \$1,950.00 | | | |
| CECCA (1) | \$4,875.00 | \$8,125.00 | \$1,562.67 | \$6,689.23 |
| CERCU (2) | \$6,500.00 | \$6,500.00 | \$5,066.24 | \$7,011.31 |
| Clerk | \$2,600.00 | \$3,250.00 | \$1,625.00 | \$3,439.64 |
| Dues | | | | |
| NAPARC | \$455.00 | \$650.00 | \$650.00 | \$650.00 |
| ICRC | \$1,625.00 | \$1,430.00 | \$0.00 | \$1,418.63 |
| PRCC/MNA(dues) (3) (5) | \$845.00 | \$650.00 | \$650.00 | \$650.00 |
| ICRC Travel | | | | |
| Missions Coordinator | \$70,700.00 | \$79,504.00 | \$17,710.13 | \$67,195.43 |
| Mission Committee | \$9,750.00 | \$12,350.00 | \$557.39 | \$11,155.47 |
| PRCC Liaison | \$325.00 | \$325.00 | | |
| Postage / Supplies | \$50.00 | | | |
| Treasurer | | \$50.00 | \$33.00 | \$33.00 |
| Stated Clerk | | \$325.00 | \$113.20 | \$116.83 |
| Acts of Synod plus shipping | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | (\$1,306.00) | (\$119.37) (9) |
| Directors and Liability Insurance | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$0.00 | \$910.00 |
| Song Book Committee | \$3,250.00 | | | |
| Publications | | | | |
| Liturgical Forms | | \$3,250.00 | \$503.75 | \$503.75 |
| Psalter Hymnal | | \$6,500.00 | | \$0.00 |
| Liturgical Forms Committee | \$5,850.00 | | | |
| Synod (Functionaries to attend) (4) | \$1,300.00 | | | |
| Treasurer - US (6) | \$4,000.00 | \$5,000.00 | \$1,500.00 | \$5,000.00 |
| Treasurer - Joint Venture (6) | \$2,600.00 | \$4,155.00 | \$2,084.62 | \$4,159.11 |
| Statistician Honorarium | | \$1,581.00 | \$393.48 | \$1,580.20 (8) |
| Webmaster Honorarium (6) | <u>\$3,375.00</u> | <u>\$3,250.00</u> | <u>\$1,625.00</u> | <u>\$3,250.00</u> |
| Total Expenses | <u>\$121,101.00</u> | <u>\$137,941.00</u> | <u>\$32,768.48</u> | <u>\$113,663.23</u> |
| TOTAL INCOME OVER (UNDER) EXPENSES | | | <u>\$17,713.36</u> | <u>(\$2,403.99)</u> |
| ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/19 (General Fund) | | | | <u>\$88,981.63</u> |

| | 4th Qtr Actual | YTD Actual |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/19 (Hymnal Fund) | | \$80,328.74 |
| Disbursement from Songbook sale | | \$75,000.00 |
| Expenses | | |
| Interest | | \$0.00 |
| ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/19 (Hymnal Fund) | | <u>\$155,328.74</u> |
| | | |
| BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/19 (Web Fund) | | \$4,033.24 |
| Contributions / Askings | \$364.00 | \$1,172.00 |
| Web Maintenance | \$765.05 | \$765.05 |
| Interest | | |
| ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/19 (Web Fund) | | <u>\$4,440.19</u> |
| TOTAL CASH BALANCE - 12/31/19 (All Funds) | | <u>\$248,750.56</u> |
| Cash Value of Interest in Trinity Psalter Hymnal JVA | 2/2920 | <u>\$159,608.69</u> (7) |

General Fund Notes

1. CECCA = Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
2. CERCU = Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
3. PRJC = Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel
4. URCNA General Fund pays expenses for synodical functionaries as approved by convening council.
5. MNA is the dues paid, set by the number of URCNA chaplains, as part of PRJC
6. Synod London established honorariums for the treasurers and the Webmaster. US and Canadian treasurers are paid fully by their respective countries and the JVA Treasurer and Webmaster are paid jointly based on the 65/35 split.
7. The JVA is a separate entity from the URCNA that we maintain a 50% stake in. The amount reflects the URCNA share of those funds, some of which are reserved for future printing and copyright expenses.
8. Statistician Honorarium was added to the budget at Synod 2018.
9. Acts of Synod are being billed back to the churches who ordered.

URCNA - Canada
Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

2018 End of Year Report (not audited)

April 29, 2019

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of the Lord. Please find the End of Year Treasurer's report for the Canadian churches of the United Reformed Churches in North America attached. From a participation perspective, I have received 2018 askings from 40 (2017 – 40) of the Canadian churches. In addition, no Canadian churches (2017 – 9) have taken a collection for the Psalter Hymnal Fund. Three classes (2017 – 3) have provided the money for the web fund.

Askings:

Overall, 2018 was a positive year with 100% of churches participating and remitting askings.

As reported on the 2018 quarterly reports, the Canadian board of directors decided that for 2018, the asking amount would be set so that 80% of the budgeted expenses would be collected. This was to account for the fact that 100% of the askings have been collected by the Canadian churches while only 82% of the budgeted expenses have been spent in the past. As a result, we projected a budgeted deficit of \$17,216 for 2018. We are happy to report that the results for 2018 was a profit of \$710. This small profit is the result of the following factors:

1. The askings rate of \$32 per family was determined using 2,152 families as the budget base; askings were received for 2,205 families.
2. Actual expenses were 86% of the budgeted expenses.
3. The sale of the liturgical forms book generated a small profit of \$4,199.

Please note that included in the expenses are a number of items that were approved for payment at Synod 2018 and that were unbudgeted items for 2018. These unbudgeted items include (1) the statistician's stipend (included in the "stipends" amount on the Canadian report and is listed separately on the JVA report (in US\$)) and (2) the clerk's reimbursement for office expenses (included in the "supplies" amount on the Canadian report and is listed separately on the JVA report (in US\$)).

The askings for 2019 have been set at \$41.50 per family. Statements were issued in January, 2019 to clerks/treasurers to show what has been budgeted to be received from their church.

Please note that payments made by the JVA are reflected separately under joint venture advances. Only the Canadian portion (translated from US to Canadian dollars) is reported.

Psalter Hymnal:

As the Trinity Psalter Hymnal is now available for purchase, funding was no longer accepted for the Psalter Hymnal fund in 2018. The hymnal fund statement accounts for the sale and distribution of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal to the Canadian churches. As at December 31, 2018,

there was \$7.29 balance in the Psalter Hymnal Fund. This balance has been transferred to the General Fund to assist with the printing / purchase of the liturgical forms books (as approved at Synod 2016).

Website:

Significant expenses were incurred to maintain the website in 2018 which has significantly decreased the website funds. Classical treasurers are reminded that Synod 2018 increased the Canadian asking to \$125 per classis for 2019 onward.

IJA Report:

Attached is the joint venture report for the period of January to December 2018. Please note that this report is in US dollars. Effective January 1, 2014, all committee expenses, dues and stipends are paid directly by the joint venture as recommended by the finance committee and approved at Synod 2012. Committee chairmen should use this report to evaluate their spending room and to set budgets for their committee.

Committee Expenses:

In the beginning of 2019, the US Treasurer and Canadian Treasurer revised the expense reimbursement form and drafted an expense reimbursement guideline to help speed up the reimbursement process. Committee members are asked to contact either the US or Canadian Treasurer for a copy of the guideline and reimbursement form, if they do not already have a copy.

The URCNA corporation is a federally incorporated charity. The Not-for-Profit Corporations Act requires that all non-profit organizations be audited (or reviewed if they fall below a specified threshold) by a public accountant, yearly. The 2018 financial statements have been sent to the accountant. At the time of this report the draft financial statements have not been completed. If you would like to obtain a complete copy of the reviewed financial statements, please contact the Canadian treasurer and a copy will be forwarded to you.

Also, please remember to use the gmail account for expense reimbursements and correspondence related to the URCNA. The gmail address is CdnURCNA@gmail.com.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Serving the Lord together.

Pam Hessels
Treasurer, URCNA
74025 Wellandport Road
Wellandport, ON
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URCNA – CANADA
Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

2018 Fourth Quarter Report (not audited)

General Fund

| | Jan - Sep | Oct - Dec | YTD TOTAL | Yrly Budget |
|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Income | | | | |
| Askings | 68,448.00 | 2,112.00 | 70,560.00 | 68,864.00 |
| Donations and other | - | 4.53 | 4.53 | - |
| Total Income | <u>68,448.00</u> | <u>2,116.53</u> | <u>70,564.53</u> | <u>68,864.00</u> |
| Expenses | | | | |
| Joint Venture Advances | | | | |
| Bank charges | 6.26 | 4.14 | 10.40 | 17.65 |
| Committee expenses | | | | |
| Appeals | - | - | - | 1,324.00 |
| CECCA (note 1) | 3,023.32 | - | 3,023.32 | 3,310.00 |
| CERCU (note 2) | 308.72 | 2,749.11 | 3,057.83 | 4,413.00 |
| Liturgical forms | 1,865.56 | - | 1,865.56 | 3,972.00 |
| Missions | 5,693.67 | 369.42 | 6,063.09 | 6,620.00 |
| PRCC | - | - | - | 220.00 |
| Songbook | 962.27 | - | 962.27 | 2,207.00 |
| Dues | | | | |
| ICRC | 946.39 | - | 946.39 | 1,100.00 |
| MNA | - | 417.86 | 417.86 | 575.00 |
| NAPARC | - | 464.29 | 464.29 | 310.00 |
| Missions coordinator | 31,282.27 | 11,158.14 | 42,440.41 | 47,642.15 |
| Stipends (note 3) | 4,988.84 | 1,925.00 | 6,913.84 | 6,201.35 |
| Supplies (note 4) | 21.83 | 236.40 | 258.23 | 22.00 |
| Synod attendance | 392.61 | - | 392.61 | 883.00 |
| Bank charges | 135.00 | 45.00 | 180.00 | - |
| D&O insurance | - | 723.00 | 723.00 | 1,100.00 |
| Government filing fee | - | 20.00 | 20.00 | 30.00 |
| Postage | 29.09 | 7.06 | 36.15 | 50.00 |
| Professional fees | 2,359.44 | - | 2,359.44 | 2,300.00 |
| Treasurer | 2,920.06 | 998.95 | 3,919.01 | 3,782.85 |
| Total Expenses | <u>54,935.33</u> | <u>19,118.37</u> | <u>74,053.70</u> | <u>86,080.00</u> |
| | <u>13,512.67</u> | <u>(17,001.84)</u> | <u>(3,489.17)</u> | <u>(17,216.00)</u> |

| | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Liturgical Forms Book | | | | |
| Book sales | 47,969.65 | 12,965.70 | 60,935.35 | - |
| Publication costs | <u>46,652.85</u> | <u>10,083.31</u> | <u>56,736.16</u> | - |
| Profit on LFB (note 5) | <u>1,316.80</u> | <u>2,882.39</u> | <u>4,199.19</u> | - |
| Net Total | <u>14,829.47</u> | <u>(14,119.45)</u> | <u>710.02</u> | <u>(17,216.00)</u> |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--|-----------|-----------|
| Balance Sheet | | 2018 | 2017 |
| Bank | | 58,231.83 | 85,569.56 |
| Accounts receivable (note 6) | | 8,957.27 | 4,911.96 |
| Inventory: LFB | | 24,998.41 | - |
| Prepays (note 7) | | 1,000.00 | 2,985.84 |
| Accounts payable | | 3,274.53 | 4,264.40 |
| General fund balance | | 89,912.98 | 89,202.96 |

NOTES:

- (1) CECCA – Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
- (2) CERCU – Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
- (3) Represents the Canadian portion of the webmaster, clerk, statistician and JV treasurer stipends. These stipends are paid via the “joint venture” since they are paid to individuals outside of Canada. The statistician position was created and approved at Synod 2018. The statistician stipend was not included in the budget set at Synod 2016.
- (4) Synod 2018 approved reimbursement of the clerk’s expenses; these were not included in the budget set at Synod 2016
- (5) The liturgical forms book selling price was set to recover expenses related to the printing of the book; however, the exchange rate has fluctuated and has resulted in a greater profit being realized as books have been sold (selling price is set in US\$)
- (6) Represents the refundable portion of GST/HST to be received from Canada Revenue Agency as well as amount owing from the JVA for committee expenses paid to Canadian committee members (payment is made quarterly).
- (7) Represents committee expenses pertaining to 2019 (paid in 2018)

Hymnal Fund

| | Jan - Sep | Oct - Dec | YTD TOTAL |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Income | | | |
| TPH Sales | <u>193,221.94</u> | - | <u>193,221.94</u> |
| Total Income | <u>193,221.94</u> | - | <u>193,221.94</u> |
| Expenses | | | |
| Publications: TPH | 246,041.44 | 101.30 | 246,142.74 |
| Total Expenses | <u>246,041.44</u> | <u>101.30</u> | <u>246,142.74</u> |
| Net Total (note 1) | <u>(52,819.50)</u> | <u>(101.30)</u> | <u>(52,920.80)</u> |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Balance Sheet | <u>2018</u> | <u>2017</u> |
| Bank | 76.16 | 51,986.19 |
| Accounts receivable | 32.43 | 941.90 |
| Accounts payable | 101.30 | - |
| Psalter fund balance (note 2) | 7.29 | 52,928.09 |

NOTES:

- (1) The deficit on the sale of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal represents the cost of the TPH's purchased for the Canadian churches.
- (2) The Psalter Hymnal fund balance of \$7.29 has been transferred to the general fund to assist with the purchase of the liturgical forms books (as approved at Synod 2016)

Web Fund

| | Jan - Sep | Oct - Dec | YTD TOTAL |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Income | | | |
| Classis | 300.00 | - | 300.00 |
| Total Income | <u>300.00</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>300.00</u> |
| Expenses | 536.75 | 499.80 | 1,036.55 |
| Total Expenses | <u>536.75</u> | <u>499.80</u> | <u>1,036.55</u> |
| Net Total | <u>(236.75)</u> | <u>(499.80)</u> | <u>(736.55)</u> |
| Balance Sheet | | <u>2018</u> | <u>2017</u> |
| Bank | | 306.00 | 942.55 |
| Accounts receivable | | - | 100.00 |
| Web fund balance | | 306.00 | 1,042.55 |

URCNA – Joint

Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

2018 Fourth Quarter Report (not audited) – in USD

General Fund

| | Jan - Sep | Oct - Dec | YTD TOTAL | Yrly Budget |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Income | | | | |
| URCNA - Canada | 39,866.29 | 13,501.45 | 53,367.74 | 62,386.49 |
| URCNA - US | 74,037.37 | 25,074.16 | 99,111.53 | 115,860.51 |
| Interest | 27.64 | 0.72 | 28.36 | - |
| Sundry - presentations | - | 318.82 | 318.82 | - |
| Total Income | <u>113,931.30</u> | <u>38,895.15</u> | <u>152,826.45</u> | <u>178,247.00</u> |
| Expenses | | | | |
| Bank charges | 40.07 | 9.85 | 49.92 | 40.00 |
| Committee expenses | | | | |
| Appeals | - | - | - | 3,000.00 |
| CECCA (note 1) | 6,949.64 | - | 6,949.64 | 7,500.00 |
| CERCUC (note 2) | 707.03 | 6,018.06 | 6,725.09 | 10,000.00 |
| Liturgical forms | 4,244.60 | - | 4,244.60 | 9,000.00 |
| Missions | 13,096.75 | 814.88 | 13,911.63 | 15,000.00 |
| Songbook | 2,179.99 | - | 2,179.99 | 5,000.00 |
| Dues | | | | |
| ICRC | 2,182.50 | - | 2,182.50 | 2,500.00 |
| MNA | - | 900.00 | 900.00 | 1,200.00 |
| NAPARC | - | 1,000.00 | 1,000.00 | 700.00 |
| Missions coordinator | | | | |
| Office supplies/telephone | 1,943.46 | 798.53 | 2,741.99 | 7,500.00 |
| Salary and benefits | 62,672.19 | 20,050.69 | 82,722.88 | 80,622.00 |
| Travel and mileage | 6,407.41 | 3,552.83 | 9,960.24 | 20,000.00 |
| PRCC | - | - | - | 500.00 |
| Stipends (note 3) | | | | |
| Clerk | 3,000.00 | 1,000.00 | 4,000.00 | 4,000.00 |
| Statistician (note 4) | 622.85 | 616.21 | 1,239.06 | - |
| Treasurer | 4,371.55 | 1,419.44 | 5,790.99 | 5,550.00 |
| Webmaster | 3,375.00 | 1,125.00 | 4,500.00 | 4,500.00 |
| Supplies | | | | |
| Clerk (note 4) | - | 482.61 | 482.61 | - |
| Office supplies | - | 30.55 | 30.55 | 50.00 |
| Synod | 905.40 | - | 905.40 | 1,585.00 |
| Website | 1,232.86 | 1,076.50 | 2,309.36 | - |
| Total Expenses | <u>113,931.30</u> | <u>38,895.15</u> | <u>152,826.45</u> | <u>178,247.00</u> |
| Net Total | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> |

| Balance Sheet | 2018 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Bank (note 5) | 4,270.91 |
| Accounts receivable (note 6) | 17,657.28 |
| Prepays (note 7) | 2,870.44 |
| Accounts payable (note 8) | 6,093.83 |
| Advance from URCNA – Canada (note 9) | 8,704.80 |
| Advance from URCNA – US (note 10) | 10,000.00 |
| General fund balance | - |

NOTES:

- (1) CECCA – Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
- (2) CERCU – Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
- (3) Represents the webmaster, clerk, statistician, and JV treasurer stipends. The stipends paid to the Canadian and US Treasurers are represented on the financial report from the Canadian and US operations
- (4) Represents items approved for payment at Synod 2018 that were not budgeted for at Synod 2016.
- (5) The bank balance is provided for information purposes
- (6) Represents the amount owing from the Canadian and US treasurers to the JVA for committee expenses
- (7) Represents committee expenses pertaining to 2019 (paid in 2018)
- (8) Represents the amount owing to the US committee members for travel expenses as well as amounts owing to the Canadian URCNA for expenses incurred by Canadian committee members
- (9) Payments for the liturgical forms book made in US\$ not converted into Cdn\$ but left in the JVA for future publication costs
- (10) URCNA – US has advanced money to the JVA to ensure that expenses can be paid in a more timely manner

URCNA - Canada
Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

2019 End of Year Report (not audited)

January 29, 2020

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of the Lord. Please find the End of Year Treasurer's report for the Canadian churches of the United Reformed Churches in North America attached. From a participation perspective, I have received 2019 askings from 42 (2018 – 40) of the Canadian churches. In addition, three classes (2018 – 3) have provided the money for the web fund.

Askings:

Overall, 2019 was a positive year with 100% of churches participating and remitting askings.

As reported on the 2019 quarterly reports, when the board reviewed the budget items approved at Synod 2018, it was noted that most of the items were reasonable. Rather than doing a broad reduction like it had in 2018, the board looked at each item and set the askings based on what was anticipated to be spent. Consequently, there was a budgeted deficit of \$2,560 for 2019. We are happy to report that the results for 2019 was a profit of \$4,023. This small profit is the result of the following factors:

1. The askings rate of \$41.50 per family was determined using 2,205 families as the budget base; askings were received for 2,177 families¹.
2. Actual expenses were 98% of the budgeted expenses.
3. The sale of the liturgical forms book generated a small profit of \$4,768.

Please note that included in the expenses is the creeds and confessions app that was approved for payment at Synod 2018 but was not included in the amount to be collected via askings. The Canadian board decided to have the development costs related to the app be paid out of surplus funds. Other expenses that were not budgeted include the website fees related to threeforms and prayers and forms websites. They are noted here so that they will be included in future budgets.

The askings for 2020 have been set at \$41.00 per family (decreased from the previously announced \$43 per family). Statements were issued in January, 2020 to clerks/treasurers to show what has been budgeted to be received from their church as well as to explain the reason for the decrease in rate.

Please note that on the Canadian financial report, payments made by the JVA are reflected separately under joint venture advances. Only the Canadian portion (translated from US to Canadian dollars) is reported.

¹ Please ensure that your church keeps your church statistics up to date with the Statistician. The family numbers are used to set the askings budget amount. Incorrect and non-updated records make determining the askings amount more challenging.

Website:

Significant expenses were incurred to maintain the website in 2019 which has significantly decreased the website funds. I have brought the declining bank balance to the attention of the website oversight committee for them to make a recommendation at Synod 2020 to rectify the situation. Classical treasurers are reminded that Synod 2018 increased the Canadian asking to \$125 per classis for 2019 onward.

JVA Report:

Attached is the joint venture report for the period of January to December 2019. Please note that this report is in US dollars. Effective January 1, 2014, all committee expenses, dues and stipends are paid directly by the joint venture as recommended by the finance committee and approved at Synod 2012. Committee chairmen should use this report to evaluate their spending room and to set budgets for their committee.

Committee Expenses:

In the beginning of 2020, the US Treasurer and Canadian Treasurer revised the expense reimbursement form and drafted an expense reimbursement guideline to help speed up the reimbursement process. Committee members are asked to contact either the US or Canadian Treasurer for a copy of the guideline and reimbursement form, if they do not already have a copy.

Committee chairmen, please take note when setting budgets for 2021 onward, that the Canadian mileage rate will be increased to \$0.53 per km (from the current \$0.48 per km).

The URCNA corporation is a federally incorporated charity. The Not-for-Profit Corporations Act requires that all non-profit organizations be audited (or reviewed if they fall below a specified threshold) by a public accountant, yearly. The 2019 financial statements have been sent to the accountant. At the time of this report the draft financial statements have not been completed. If you would like to obtain a complete copy of the reviewed financial statements, please contact the Canadian treasurer and a copy will be forwarded to you.

Also, please remember to use the gmail account for expense reimbursements and correspondence related to the URCNA. The gmail address is CdnURCNA@gmail.com.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Serving the Lord together.

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URCNA – CANADA

Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

2019 Fourth Quarter Report (not audited)

General Fund

| | Jan - Sep | Oct - Dec | YTD TOTAL | Yrly Budget |
|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Income | | | | |
| Askings | 89,935.00 | 332.00 | 90,267.00 | 91,367.00 |
| Acts of Synod - sales | 381.14 | - | 381.14 | - |
| Donations (note 1) | - | 400.00 | 400.00 | - |
| Total Income | <u>90,316.14</u> | <u>732.00</u> | <u>91,048.14</u> | <u>91,367.00</u> |
| Expenses | | | | |
| Joint Venture Advances | | | | |
| Acts of Synod | 24.69 | - | 24.69 | - |
| Bank charges | 5.34 | 4.56 | 9.90 | 18.65 |
| Committee expenses | | | | |
| CECCA (note 2) | 4,707.04 | - | 4,707.04 | 5,818.75 |
| CERCU (note 3) | 1,164.76 | 3,522.50 | 4,687.26 | 4,655.00 |
| Missions | 7,965.40 | 1.58 | 7,966.98 | 8,844.50 |
| PRCC | - | - | - | 232.75 |
| Dues | | | | |
| ICRC | 1,042.35 | - | 1,042.35 | 1,024.10 |
| MNA | - | 461.20 | 461.20 | 465.50 |
| NAPARC | 450.75 | - | 450.75 | 465.50 |
| Missions coordinator | 36,490.74 | 11,394.56 | 47,885.30 | 54,673.85 |
| Stipends (note 4) | 6,542.03 | 2,176.61 | 8,718.64 | 8,602.65 |
| Supplies | 72.13 | 183.03 | 255.16 | 256.00 |
| Website (note 5) | 349.33 | - | 349.33 | - |
| Acts of Synod – cost of sale | 381.14 | - | 381.14 | - |
| Bank charges | 45.00 | 14.00 | 59.00 | 200.00 |
| D&O insurance | - | 723.00 | 723.00 | 1,100.00 |
| Government filing fee | - | 20.00 | 20.00 | 20.00 |
| Postage | 28.24 | 7.92 | 36.16 | 50.00 |
| Professional fees (note 6) | 2,794.50 | - | 2,794.50 | 2,500.00 |
| Publication: Creeds app | 5,623.89 | - | 5,623.89 | - |
| Qualified donee donation(1) | - | 400.00 | 400.00 | - |
| Treasurer | 3,897.75 | 1,299.25 | 5,197.00 | 5,000.00 |
| Total Expenses | <u>71,585.08</u> | <u>20,208.21</u> | <u>91,793.29</u> | <u>93,927.25</u> |
| | <u>18,731.06</u> | <u>(19,476.21)</u> | <u>(745.15)</u> | <u>(2,560.25)</u> |

| Liturgical Forms Book & Creeds / Confessions Booklet | | | | |
|--|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Book sales (note 7) | 19,040.88 | 5,671.98 | 24,712.86 | - |
| Cost of sales | 15,239.39 | 4,165.42 | 19,404.81 | - |
| Exchange loss | 509.57 | 30.52 | 540.09 | - |
| Profit on book sales | <u>3,291.92</u> | <u>1,476.04</u> | <u>4,767.96</u> | <u>-</u> |
| Net Total | <u>22,022.98</u> | <u>(18,000.17)</u> | <u>4,022.81</u> | <u>(2,560.25)</u> |

| Balance Sheet | 2019 | 2018* |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Bank | 50,597.28 | 58,307.99 |
| Accounts receivable (note 8) | 8,102.03 | 8,989.70 |
| Advance to JVA (note 7) | 7,891.84 | - |
| Inventory: LFB + CCB (note 9) | 24,107.72 | 24,998.41 |
| Prepays (note 10) | 12,197.83 | 1,000.00 |
| Accounts payable (note 11) | 8,053.62 | 3,375.83 |
| Deferred revenue (note 12) | 900.00 | - |
| General fund balance | 93,943.08 | 89,920.27 |

* restated to include Psalter Hymnal fund balance transferred to General Fund

NOTES:

- (1) Donation was received from Canada Helps (on-line donation facilitator). Donation was anonymous; however, it was indicated that money was to be used to support children. The Board donated the money to a Canadian URCNA charity that works with children to honor the request.
- (2) CECCA – Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
- (3) CERCU – Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
- (4) Represents the Canadian portion of the webmaster, clerk, statistician and JV treasurer stipends. These stipends are paid via the “joint venture” since they are paid to individuals outside of Canada.
- (5) Website expenses represent the cost for the prayers/forms website and threeforms.org website
- (6) Legal fees were incurred to review proposed Missions Committee recommendations
- (7) The liturgical forms book and creeds/confessions booklet (CCB) sales are received in US funds. The funds received on the sale of the LFB and CCB have been deposited into the JVA account. Funds were used to pay for the creeds and confessions booklet. Funds continue to be deposited into the JVA account for future replenishment of inventory. The “advance to JVA” and LFB/CCB sales have been presented in Canadian dollars for this report. The exchange loss represents the money “lost” due to exchange rate fluctuations.
- (8) Represents the refundable portion of GST/HST to be received from Canada Revenue Agency as well as amount owing from the JVA for committee expenses paid to Canadian committee members (payment is made quarterly).
- (9) Represents the value of unsold copies of liturgical forms book (LFB) and creeds and confessions booklet (CCB)

- (10) Deposit paid for Synod 2020. URCNA Canada board has approved Synodical expenses to be paid using URCNA funds. Amount to be reimbursed in 2020 when Synod occurs.
- (11) Large payable due to payroll remittances changed by Canada Revenue Agency from monthly remittance to quarterly.
- (12) Represents synod display fees received in 2019; amount to be reimbursed in 2020 when Synod occurs.

Web Fund

| | Jan - Sep | Oct - Dec | YTD TOTAL |
|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Income | | | |
| Classis | 375.00 | - | 375.00 |
| Total Income | <u>375.00</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>375.00</u> |
| Expenses | - | 530.53 | 530.53 |
| Total Expenses | <u>-</u> | <u>530.53</u> | <u>530.53</u> |
| Net Total | <u>375.00</u> | <u>(530.53)</u> | <u>(155.53)</u> |
| Balance Sheet | | <u>2019</u> | <u>2018</u> |
| Bank | | 275.47 | 306.00 |
| Deferred revenue (note 1) | | 125.00 | - |
| Web fund balance | | 150.47 | 306.00 |

NOTES:

- (1) If expenses are the same as that incurred in 2019, there is not sufficient money in the bank account to cover the expense in 2020. The bank balance reflects the collection of one classis askings for 2020 (shown as deferred revenue). Only \$250 remains to be collected from the remaining 2 Canadian classis in 2020.

URCNA – Joint
Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

2019 Fourth Quarter Report (not audited) – in USD

General Fund

| | Jan - Sep | Oct - Dec | YTD TOTAL | Yrly Budget |
|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Income | | | | |
| URCNA - Canada | 44,718.49 | 13,972.70 | 58,691.19 | 63,952.68 |
| URCNA - US | 83,048.62 | 25,949.32 | 108,997.94 | 118,769.20 |
| Interest | 21.05 | 0.88 | 21.93 | - |
| Sundry - presentations | - | 600.13 | 600.13 | - |
| Total Income | <u>127,788.16</u> | <u>40,523.03</u> | <u>168,311.19</u> | <u>182,721.88</u> |
| Expenses | | | | |
| Acts of Synod | 53.44 | - | 53.44 | - |
| Bank charges | 32.61 | 11.00 | 43.61 | 40.00 |
| Committee expenses | | | | |
| CECCA (note 1) | 9,507.05 | - | 9,507.05 | 12,500.00 |
| CERCU (note 2) | 3,311.93 | 7,794.20 | 11,106.13 | 10,000.00 |
| Missions | 17,162.27 | 3.54 | 17,165.81 | 19,000.00 |
| Dues | | | | |
| ICRC | 2,182.50 | - | 2,182.50 | 2,200.00 |
| MNA | - | 1,000.00 | 1,000.00 | 1,000.00 |
| NAPARC | 1,000.00 | - | 1,000.00 | 1,000.00 |
| Missions coordinator | | | | |
| Office supplies/telephone | 1,435.39 | 498.62 | 1,934.01 | 7,500.00 |
| Salary and benefits (note 3) | 68,634.62 | 22,658.97 | 91,293.59 | 89,951.88 |
| Travel and mileage | 9,423.15 | 2,250.52 | 11,673.67 | 20,000.00 |
| PRCC | - | - | - | 500.00 |
| Stipends (note 4) | | | | |
| Clerk | 3,750.00 | 1,250.00 | 5,000.00 | 5,000.00 |
| Statistician | 1,825.71 | 605.35 | 2,431.06 | 2,465.00 |
| Treasurer | 4,784.47 | 1,614.16 | 6,398.63 | 6,015.00 |
| Webmaster | 3,750.00 | 1,250.00 | 5,000.00 | 5,000.00 |
| Supplies | | | | |
| Clerk | - | 357.96 | 357.96 | 500.00 |
| Office supplies | 160.02 | 51.71 | 211.73 | 50.00 |
| Website (note 5) | 775.00 | 1,177.00 | 1,952.00 | - |
| Total Expenses | <u>127,788.16</u> | <u>40,523.03</u> | <u>168,311.19</u> | <u>182,721.88</u> |
| Net Total | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Balance Sheet | <u>2019</u> |
| Bank (note 6) | 13,872.74 |
| Accounts receivable (note 7) | 1,284.56 |
| Prepays (note 8) | 2,193.60 |
| Accounts payable (note 9) | 1,282.59 |
| Advance from URCNA – US (note 10) | 10,000.00 |
| Advance from URCNA – Canada (note 11) | 6,068.31 |
| General fund balance | - |

NOTES:

- (1) CECCA – Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
- (2) CERCU – Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
- (3) The missions coordinator’s salary and benefits are budgeted in Canadian dollars. The amount over budget reflects exchange rate differences from what was projected.
- (4) Represents the webmaster, clerk, statistician, and JV treasurer stipends. The stipends paid to the Canadian and US treasurers are represented on the financial report from the Canadian and US operations
- (5) Website expenses represent the cost for the prayers/forms website and threeforms.org website as well as the federation website.
- (6) The bank balance is provided for information purposes
- (7) Represents the amount owing from the Canadian and US treasurers to the JVA for committee expenses
- (8) Represents airfare and accommodation expenses paid in 2019 for the missions committee January 2020 meeting.
- (9) Represents the amount owing to the US committee members for travel expenses as well as amounts owing to the Canadian URCNA for expenses incurred by Canadian committee members
- (10) URCNA – US has advanced money to the JVA to ensure that expenses can be paid in a more timely manner
- (11) Represents the funds received on the sale of the LFB and CCB that have been deposited into the US\$ account. Funds were used to pay for the printing of the creeds and confessions booklet and will be used for future inventory replenishment.

Synod

| | |
|---------------|-------------|
| Balance Sheet | <u>2019</u> |
| Bank (note 1) | 22,272.87 |
| Synod balance | 22,272.87 |

NOTE:

- (1) The funds remaining after Synod 2018 were forwarded to Wellandport URC and deposited into the JVA US\$ bank account. The URCNA Canada board has approved for Synodical expenses to be paid using Canadian funds. The funds will be used to offset expenses incurred in 2020 when Synod occurs.

Statistics and Directory Report for Synod 2020

The role of Statistics and Directory Editor of the URCNA was created at Synod Wheaton 2018 and can be summarized as the collection and compilation of statistical numbers and contact information for each of the churches of the URCNA. This data is reviewed, analyzed and presented in appropriate formats in the annual archival directory, the live directory on the URCNA website and in written and oral reports for each Synod. To begin, we will examine the statistical data that has been collected in 2018 and 2019.

STATISTICS:

Process: The submission of statistical numbers for the URCNA is completed by most churches at the end of the calendar year, although some churches are diligent to update their stats as baptisms, professions and membership transfers occur within their congregation. The numbers are simply assessed by the statistician when they are submitted (i.e. new data is compared with previously inputted numbers, number of baptized and professing members reported are added together to equal total members and numbers on the statistics form are compared with the information in the church directory info file.)

Closer examination and review of the statistical numbers is performed before the publication of the archival directory at the end of January. Statistical analysis is completed before Synod meets and is presented, as follows, in this report as well as at Synod itself.

Analysis: Prior to 2018, the cut-off date for the statistical data of the URCNA was not consistently December 31. While interesting, analysis cannot be accurately performed on data collected before 2018 due to the variability in the length of time that it may represent. For the purpose of this report, the data for the previous two calendar years will be examined with little emphasis on entries before that time. For statistical numbers, the response rate in 2018 was 74% of churches and in 2019, 91%. The accuracy of the following trends and counts is only as accurate as the data submitted by each of the churches in our federation. The cooperation of the churches in submitting their statistical data is much appreciated.

There are four different areas which will be closely examined. If other statistical analyses are desired by Synod, the statistician is willing to include them in future reports but for Synod 2020, statistical data will be examined in: 1) Churches 2) Members 3) Elders & Deacons 4) Ministers.

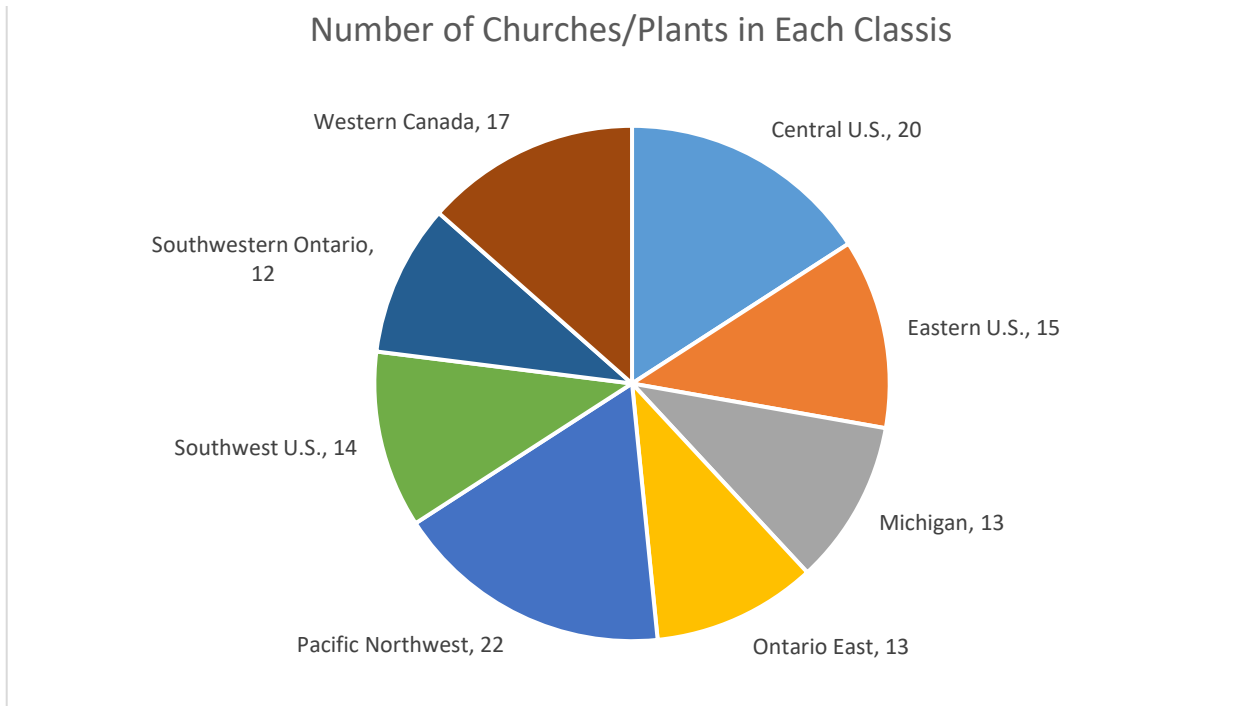
1) Churches

The total church count at the end of 2019 including church plants was 126. This was an increase of three from the total of 123 at the end of 2018. Local congregations increased from 112 to 114 as the year 2019 saw the organization of Westside Reformed Church of Cincinnati, OH as well as the addition of Cornerstone Christian Church of Medford, OR to the URCNA.

At the end of 2018, there were 11 church plants in the URCNA. During 2019, Redeemer Reformed Church of Cambridge, MD disbanded and Westside Reformed Church of Cincinnati, OH ceased to be a plant. Three new church plants began, namely Pocono Reformed Bible Church of East Stroudsburg, PA, Gig Harbor United Reformed Church of Tacoma, WA and Peace United

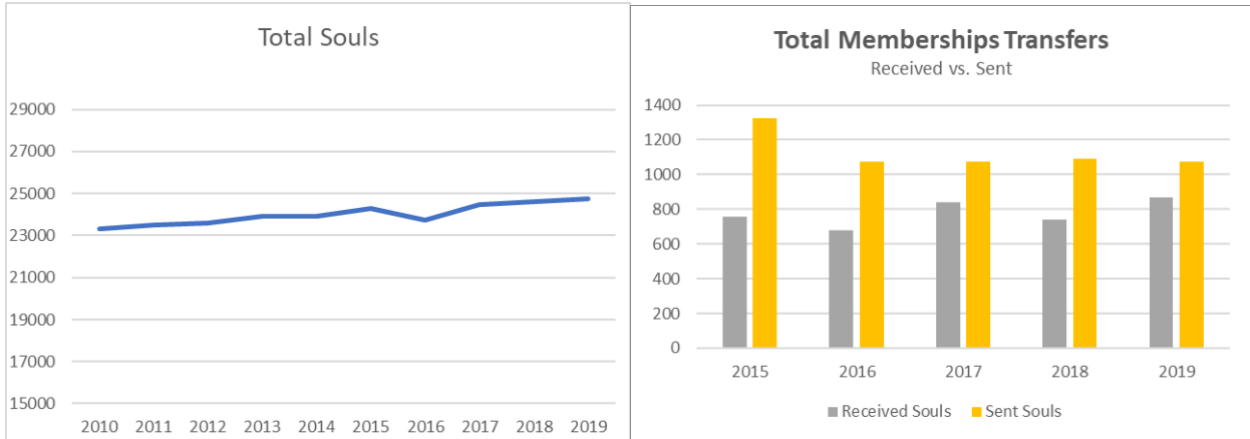
Reformed Church of Vancouver, WA resulting in the total church plants as of December 31, 2019 being 12.

| | Dec 31, 2018 | Dec 31, 2019 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| URCNA Churches (incl. plants) | 123 | 126 |
| Local Organized Churches | 112 | 114 |
| Church Plants | 11 | 12 |
| Vacant Churches/Plants | 11 | 21 |



2) Members

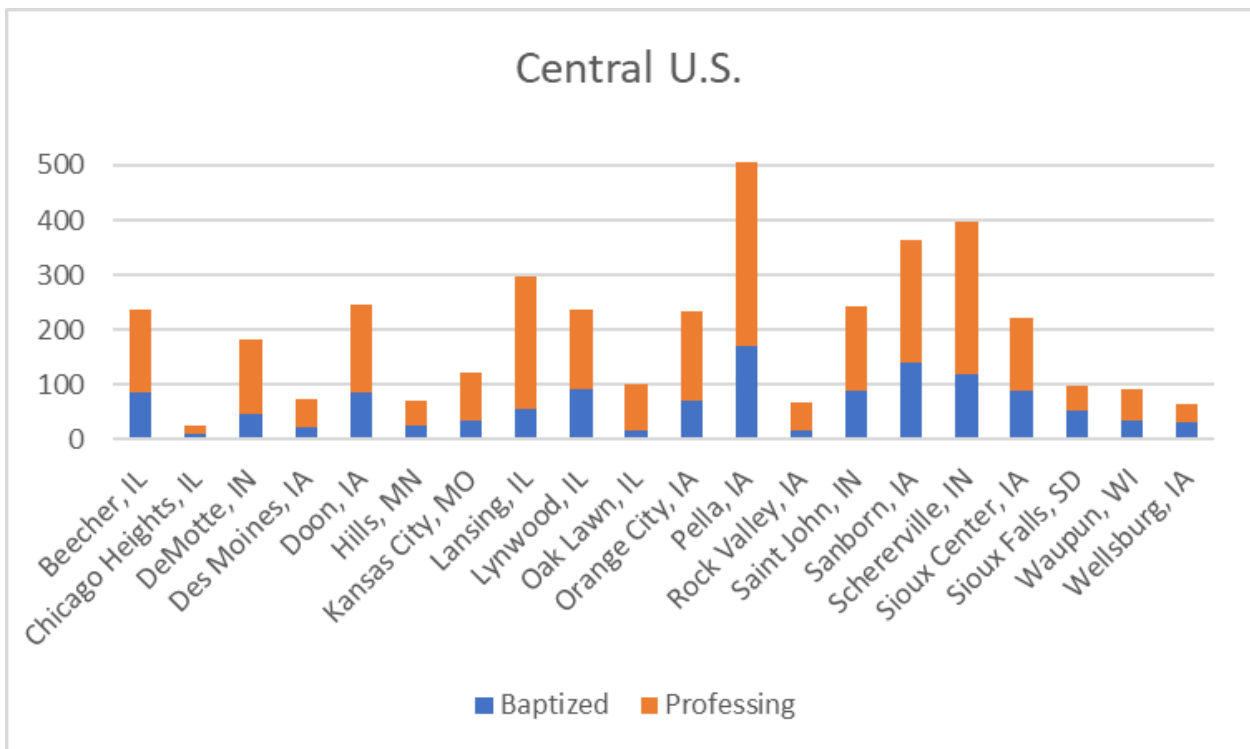
The number of total souls at the end of 2019 was 24,773 souls. This was an increase of 156 members from the total at the end of 2018 (24,617). The trend over the last 10 years has shown the URCNA slightly increasing in size with a 0.6% increase in the last year. Typically, we are transferring more members to other congregations than receiving members from other congregations. Over the last five years however, there was an average of 2.7 baptisms for every death, thus allowing for a slight increase in souls.

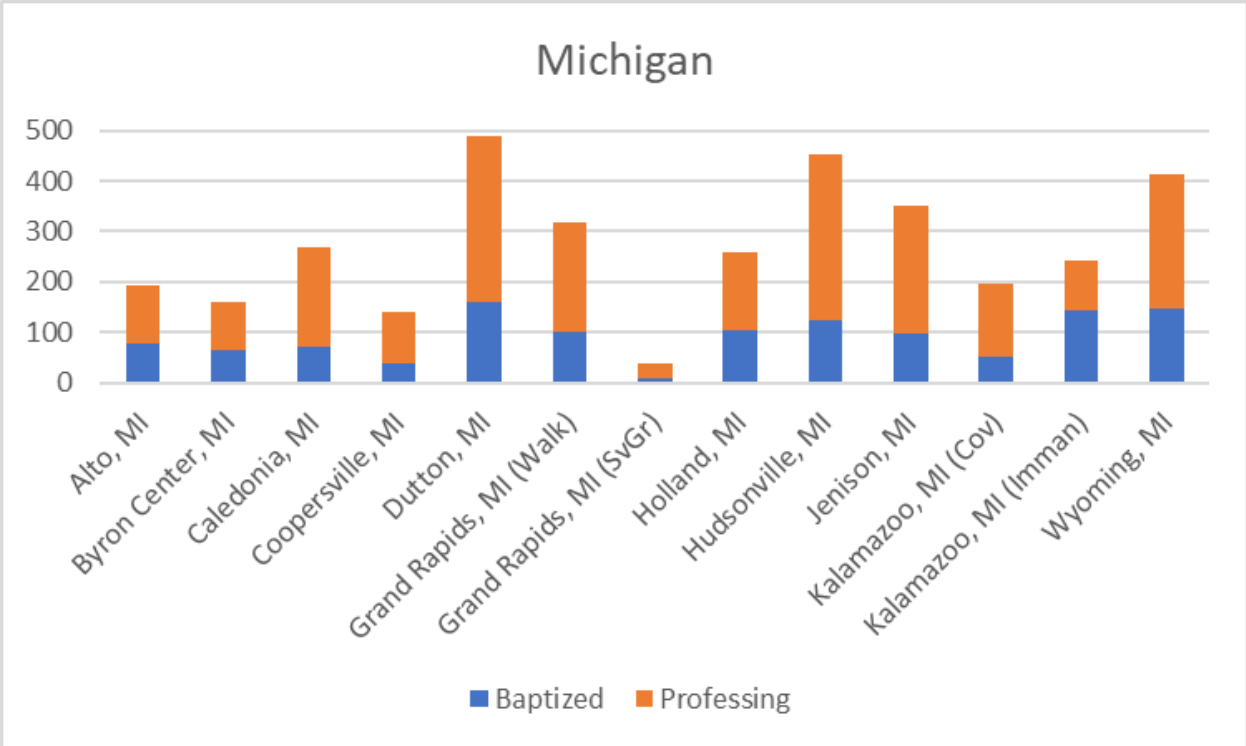
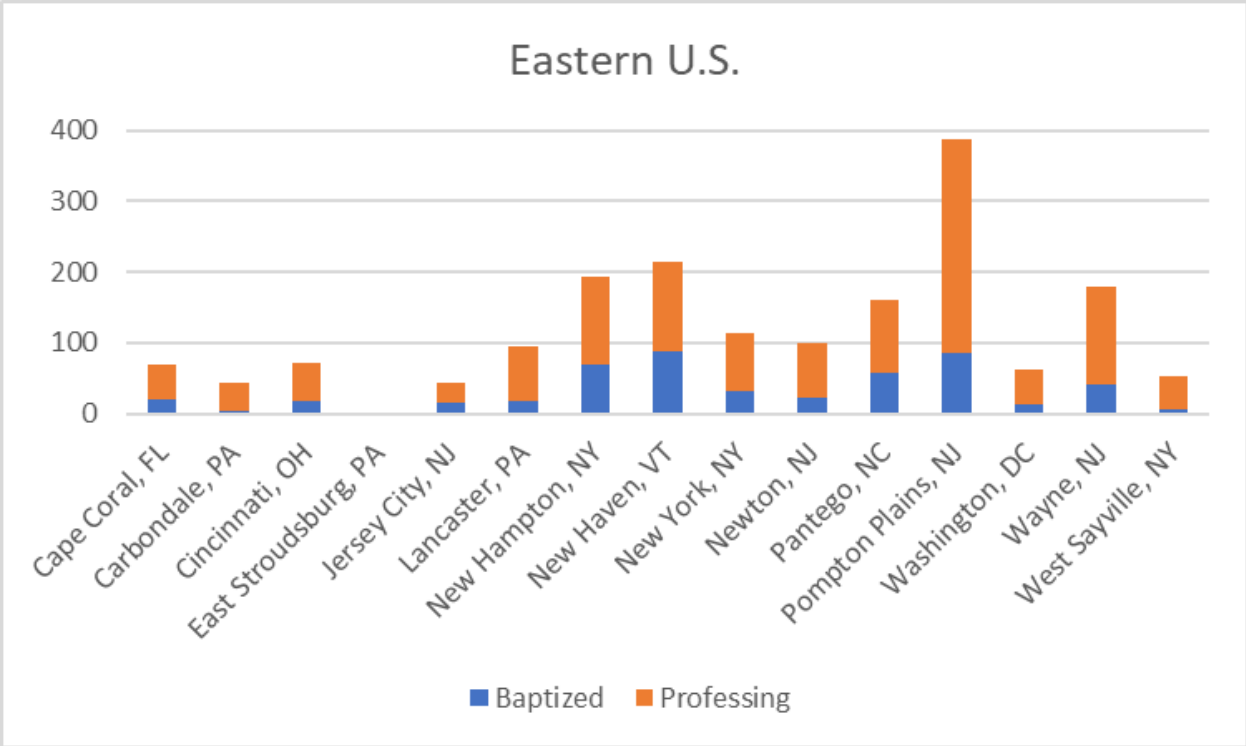


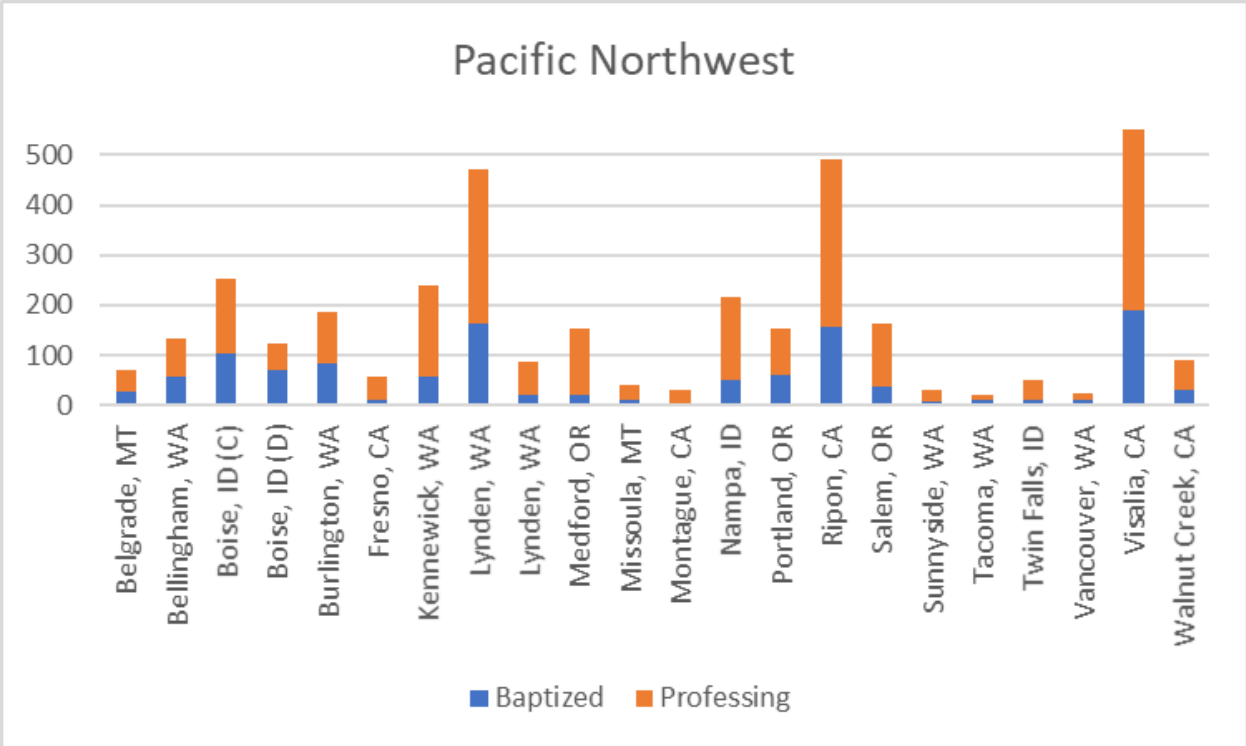
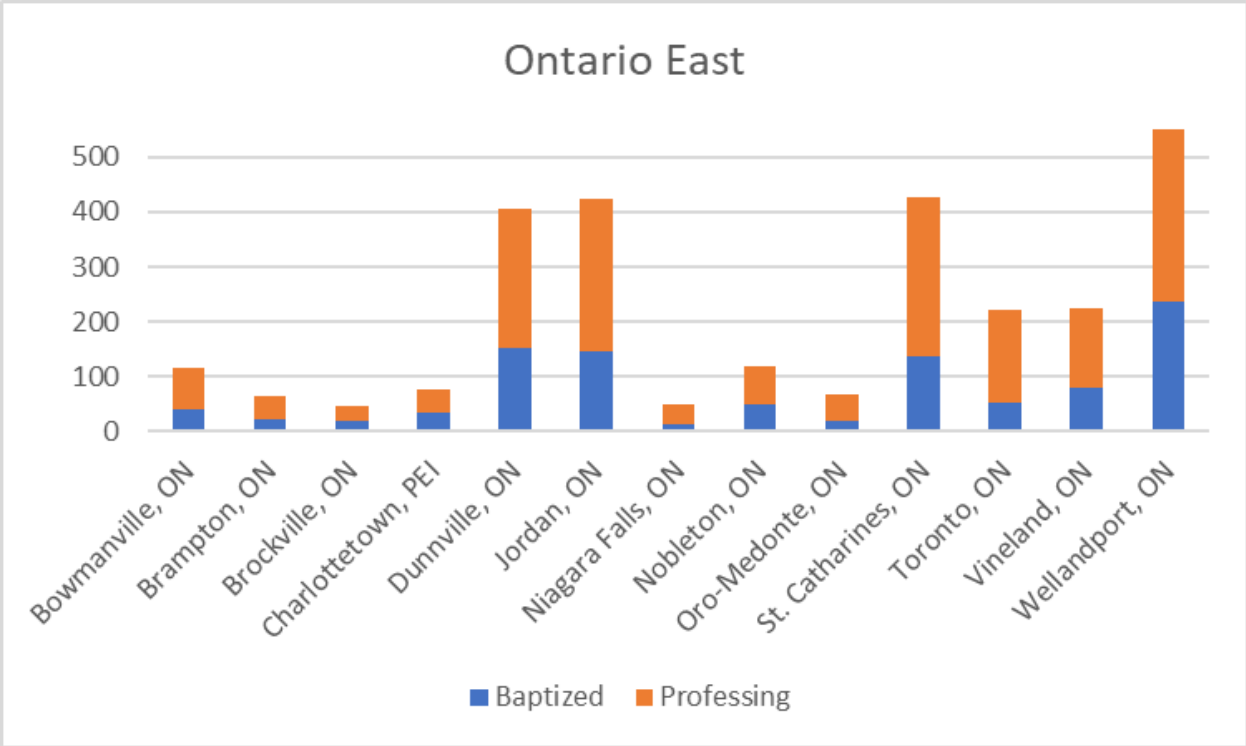
Of the total souls in the URCNA at the end of 2019, 67% were professing members and 33% were baptized members.

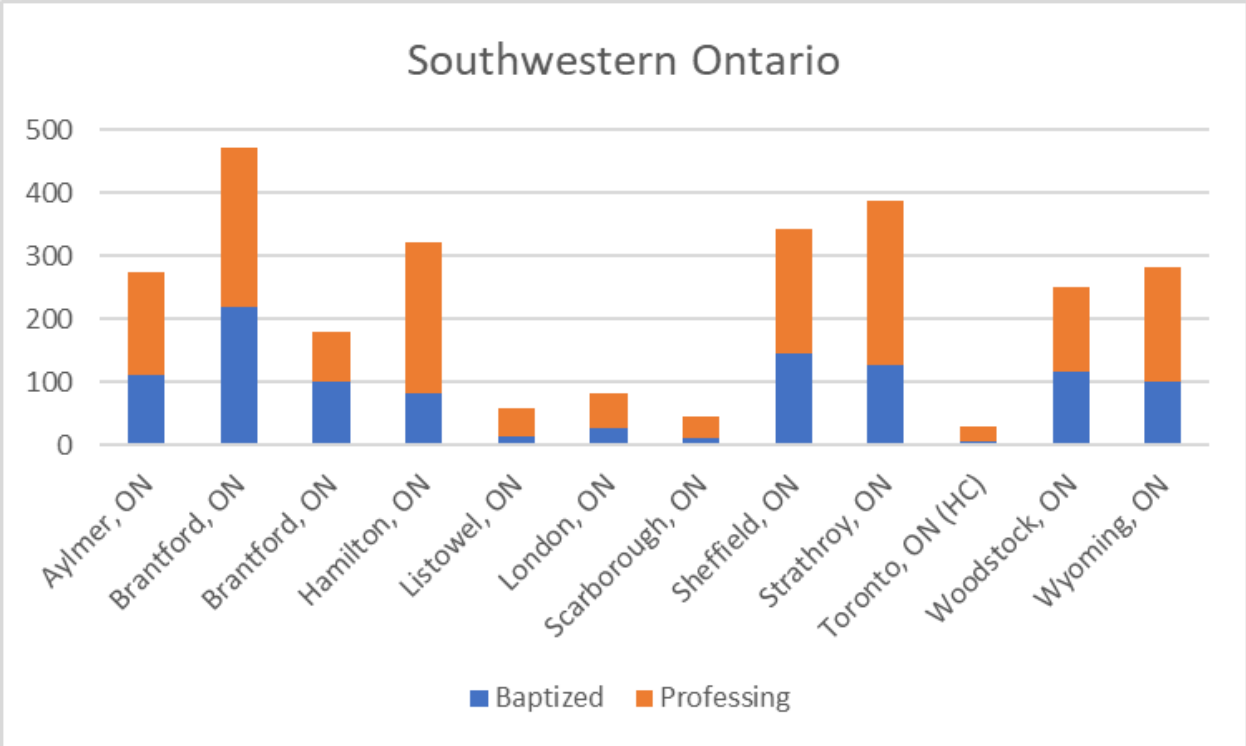
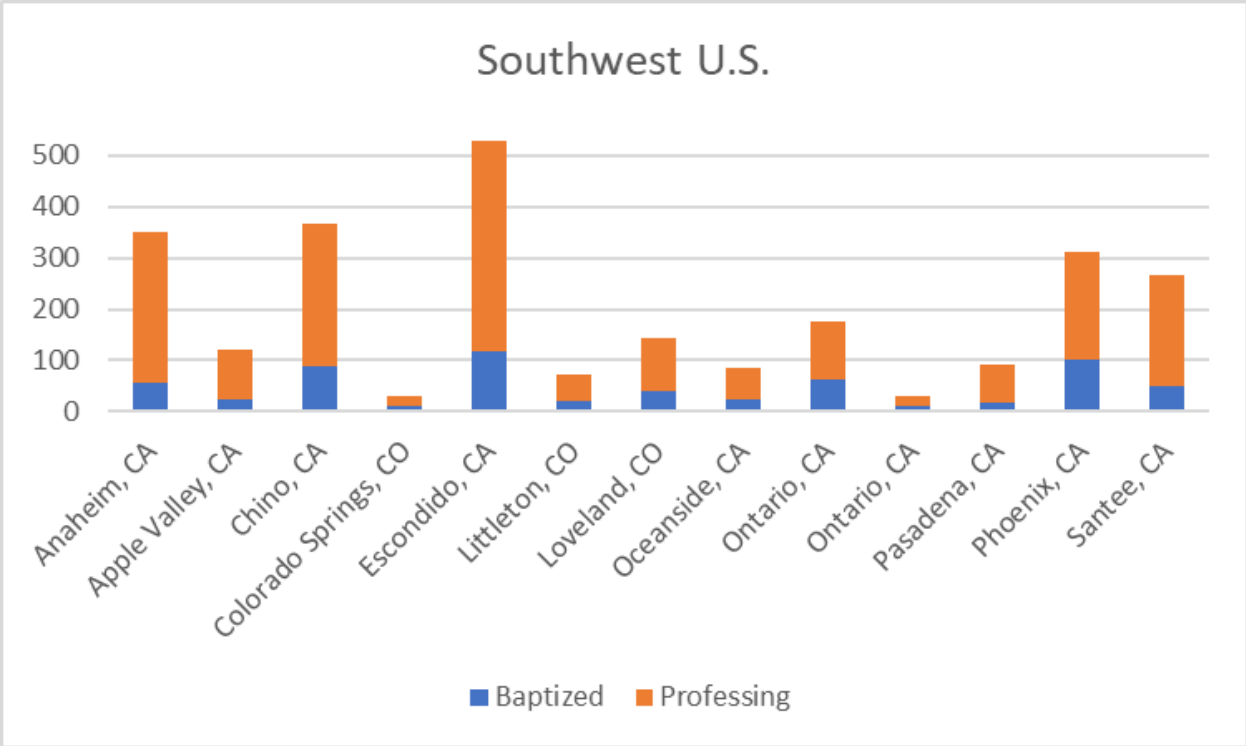
Demographics of Individual Churches

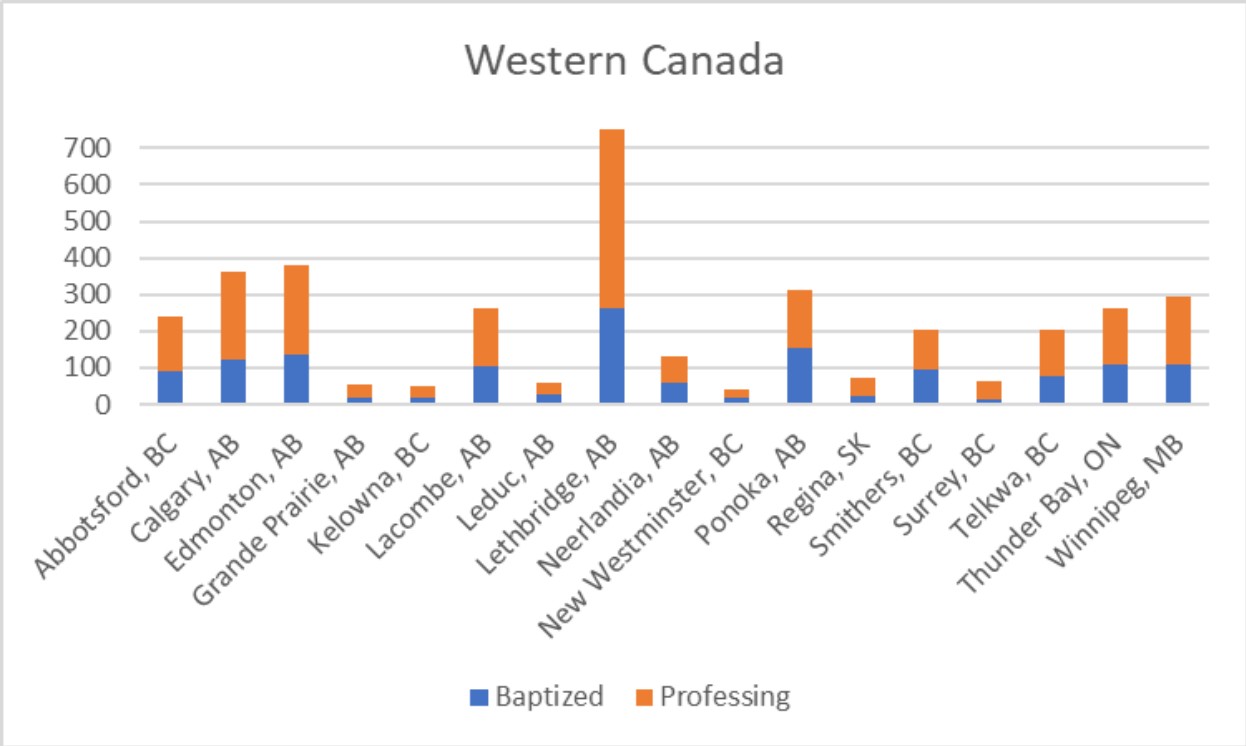
Of interest is a visual picture of the churches in our denomination arranged by classis. The following bar graphs show the total souls for each church broken down as baptized and professing members. While the number of families within a church is useful data to gather (especially as it pertains to askings), it sometimes presents a skewed impression of the church demographics as it does not allow for singles to be very well illustrated, thus the use of baptized vs. professing in the following graphs:











3) Elders and Deacons

At the end of 2019, there were 1,198 elders and deacons in the URCNA. With a total of 24,773 souls, a simple ratio could be calculated of one council member for every 21 souls. This is of little significance however, since a council member could be an elder or a deacon. For further usefulness in this field, it is suggested that the number of elders and deacons be reported seperately. This would allow analysis to be made on how many souls are under the guidance of each elder or deacon in a congregation.

It must also be considered that the count of total elders and deacons may be in error for this report due to the realization during analysis that both the supervising church and the church plant may be reporting the same men in their count. This potential error will be further examined and corrected for the 2020 statistics.

4) Ministers

The total count of ministers at the end of 2019 was 184. This was an increase of 8 ministers from the total count of 176 at the end of 2018. The URCNA received nine ministers in 2019: five by ordination and four by colloquium doctum/ grandfathered in. We bade farewell to three by death, one by acceptance of a call outside the URCNA or one by deposition. The remaining four ministers in the increased count can be explained by recent documentation of ministers that were not reported previously but whose credentials are held by a church in the federation.

The chart below shows the counts for the previous two years. Over time, this information will be more useful in ministerial analysis as more data will be available. For this report, the following table is for historical reference and for information.

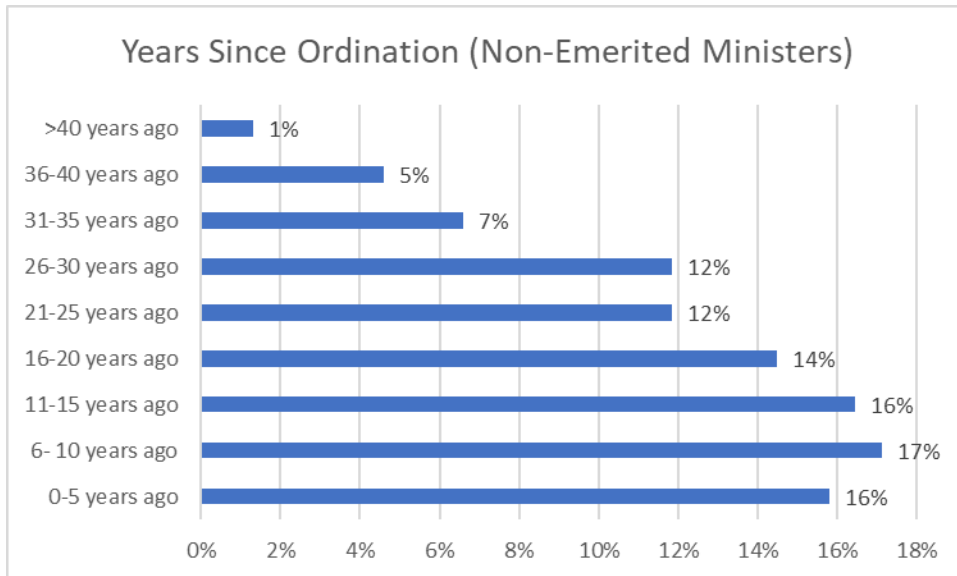
| | 2018 | 2019 |
|----------------------------------|------|------|
| Ordinations | 5 | 5 |
| Received (Colloquium Doctum etc) | 0 | 4 |
| | | |
| Emeritations | 2 | 6 |
| Deaths | 1 | 3 |
| Calls Accepted Outside URCNA | 3 | 1 |
| Depositions | 0 | 1 |
| | | |
| Candidates (as of Dec 31) | 5 | 9 |
| Exhorters (as of Dec 31) | 20 | 20 |

Of interest is the breakdown of ministers in the URCNA as of December 31, 2019. Of our total ministerial count, 153 are in active ministry. With 107 as ministers of local congregations and 12 as domestic missionaries, we have a total of 119 ministers that serve 105 churches in North America (some of the churches have more than one minister on staff). At the close of last year, there were 19 vacant churches and 2 vacant church plants but only 9 candidates at that time and one minister seeking a call. Should each of the available men be called to a vacant church, there is still a deficit of 11 pastors for the churches of the URCNA as of December 31, 2019. With 20 licensed exhorters who are in various stages of seminary study, there is the possibility that in time, all of the pulpits would be filled however urging young men to consider the ministry is strongly encouraged.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| | |
| Ministers of Local Congregations | 107 |
| Missions Coordinator | 1 |
| Domestic Missionaries | 12 |
| Foreign Missionaries | 8 |
| Theological Education (MINTS & DHRBS) | 7 |
| Seminary Professors | 8 |
| Chaplains | 6 |
| Emeritus | 31 |
| Other | 4 |
| Total URCNA Ministers | 184 |
| Candidates | 9 |
| Licensed Exhorters | 20 |

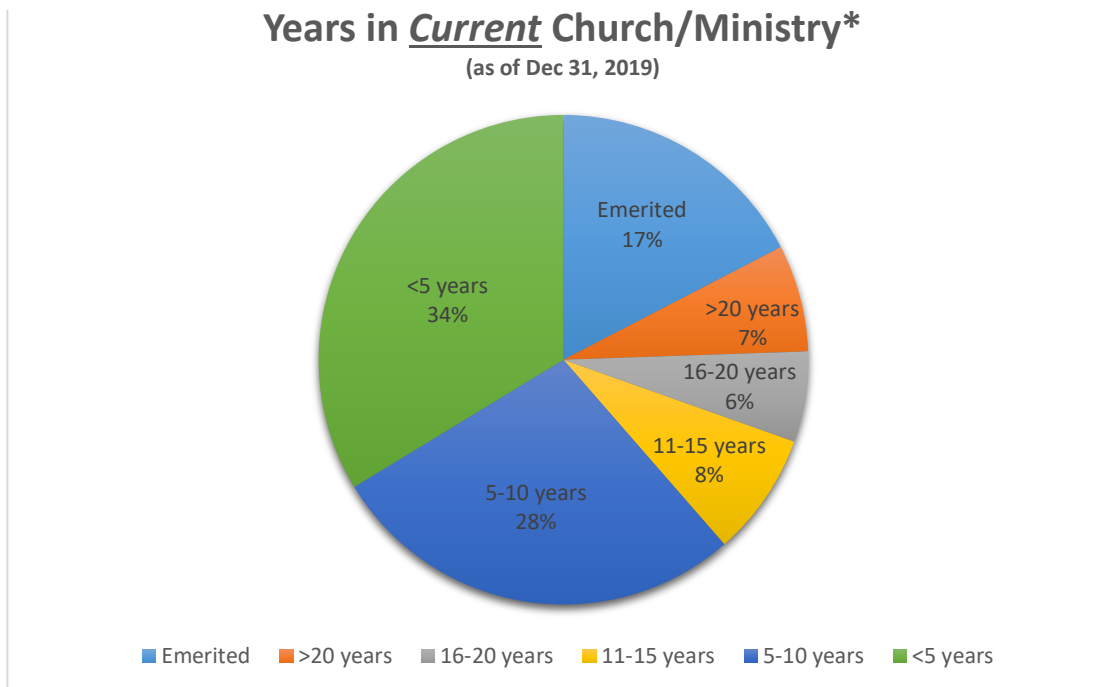
Number of Years in Ministry

The bar graph below shows how long the ministers of the federation have been in active service. Nearly half of the men have been in the ministry for 15 years or less (49%). This is useful information; however, it doesn't tell us how many potential years of active ministry are remaining. Adding a field to the Ministerial Info form with date of birth would be advantageous for advanced predictive analysis. This information would not need to be publicly known but could be used for statistical purposes only.



Number of Years at Current Church/Ministry

This statistic is of interest when considering how frequently ministers move from one congregation to another. In the pie chart below it can be seen that as of Dec 31, 2019, 34% of the ministers have been at their current church/ministry for less than 5 years, 28% for 5-10 years, 21% for more than 10 years and 17% of our ministers are emerited.



**If the church the minister is currently serving in has recently joined the URC, the number of years recorded above may be from when they officially became a URCNA congregation.*

There are many interesting statistics that can be analyzed with the data that we have for the churches, members and ministers of the URCNA. One thing to routinely count is the blessings we have from God in the word which is faithfully preached, the men who joyfully serve and the congregations which can freely gather. We are not called to rely on the size of our “army” or the strength of our weapons but to fully trust in the awesome God that we serve. May His name be praised and glorified!

CONTACT INFORMATION/DIRECTORY

Whereas the statistics files are typically updated near the end of the calendar year and are used mainly for the archival directory, the contact information (church directory info, ministerial, missionary, candidate and exhorter files) is used for both the archival directory and the live directory on the URCNA website. It is intended to be updated continually throughout the year as changes happen within the churches.

For the directory to be most useful to the churches, the cooperation of the clerks and pastors (or those responsible for updates) is critical. Updating a church’s files on the URCNA website is difficult to remember and is often not a priority for many. The statistician can send out reminders to update church records *when informed* of ordinations, installations, and successful candidacy and licensure exams and strongly encourages the churches to make good use of Ministerial News. Currently the statistician routinely reads the Ministerial News, the minutes/agendas of each classis, the Christian Renewal announcements and any emails received to stay informed and to encourage the churches to make necessary changes to the website.

Perhaps knowing the month in which each church votes for new council members would be beneficial, allowing for a reminder email to be sent out about updating the contact details for the new chairman, clerk, treasurer etc. The churches are also encouraged to adopt a generic email for their clerk or pastor such as clerk@mychurch.com so that the need for changes to their files is not quite so urgent when a change in council takes place.

There is often no response to many emails that are sent out by the statistician to remind and inform. It is suggested that the churches add stats@URCNA.org to their safe senders list as well as ensuring that the name and email listed in “Who is Making This Update” is accurate for the current submission.

Submissions: When a change is made to a church’s files on the URCNA website, the statistician is informed via email and expected to review the changes and approve the submission. Often email correspondence is necessary to clarify/correct a submission for content. When style and formatting issues arise, the statistician can correct these errors and doesn’t need to contact the local church however the time involved is often significant. The churches are advised to pay careful attention to the Style and Formatting Guide to ensure consistency throughout the Directory. In fact, after the 2018 Archival Directory was published, the statistician was informed by the printing company that after many corrections were already made, there were still 705 style and formatting issues present in that edition. The statistician has since fixed all these errors through the somewhat tedious process of pulling up each church’s individual files and making changes through the website.

The Archival Directory

The time and effort that went into the publication of the 2018 directory was significant. Many of the pages needed to be re-created in a more up to date format. Much communication was necessary to clarify and correct the data that was currently in the system.

Some of the sections of the directory are auto generated through the website using the data that is inputted by the individual churches and cannot be modified by the statistician once they have been compiled. Currently these sections are the statistics tables, ministerial listings and the exhorter listings. After the deadline has passed, additional changes by the churches to the website results in the data used to create these sections being duplicated or overwritten by values that are not accurate for the December 31 “snapshot”. This complicates editing and is a work in progress for future publications.

Once all the submissions have been received in early January, the data is carefully examined to ensure consistency in the content submitted by each church (e.g. ministers listed on church profile page jive with ministerial listings and number of ministers listed in statistics form and church directory info form) as well as for syntax, formatting and styling issues. The draft directory is sent to the clerks of each classis and the webmaster to proofread and provide feedback.

For 2018 and 2019, the archival directory was completed and published by the end of January. Many thanks go out to the churches for your cooperation and for your patience and understanding as I am still learning how best to fill this new role of Statistics and Directory Editor of the URCNA. I praise God that I can use the abilities He has given to serve in this way. May the work that has been accomplished and continues, Lord willing, to be completed in the future, be for His glory and for the usefulness of the federation.

In His Service,
Jody Luth
Statistics and Directory Editor, URCNA.

Overture 1

Amend Church Order Articles 22 & 47 with References to Church Planting Manual

I. Background

Wonderful work is being done to bring order to URC missions. We have established church planting committees, published a church planting manual, and appointed a missions coordinator. Yet, these advances are not yet reflected in our Church Order, a document of great importance to our identity and unity.

II. Overture

Classis Eastern U.S overtures Synod to add a parenthetical statement at the end of Articles 22 & 47 in the Church Order: *‘(See The Church Planting Manual adopted at Synod 2014 for helpful guidelines at urcna.org)’*

Article 22 – Instituting a New Church

When a congregation is organized within the federation, this shall take place under the supervision of a neighboring Consistory and with the concurring advice of the classis. *(See The Church Planting Manual adopted at Synod 2014 for helpful guidelines at urcna.org.)*

Article 47 – The Church’s Mission Calling

The church's missionary task is to preach the Word of God to the unconverted. When this task is to be performed beyond the field of an organized church, it is to be carried out by ministers of the Word set apart to this labor, who are called, supported and supervised by their Consistories. The churches should assist each other in the support of their missionaries. *(See The Church Planting Manual adopted at Synod 2014 for helpful guidelines at urcna.org.)*

Grounds:

1. There is a need for more guidance in our church planting process than article 22 explains.
2. There is a need for more guidance in our church planting process than article 47 explains.
3. We have a helpful tool that was approved in Synod 2014 for guidance. (see pp.53-55 of Acts of Synod 2014)
4. By citing *‘helpful guidelines’* this motion does not run the risk of giving any authority to this Manual. Rather it stands in line with the decision of Synod 2014.
5. Due to term eldership in many churches, it is difficult to depend on synodically-approved advice to carry on without some continual reference.
6. Future pastors, who may be unaware of this tool, would now have a reference in their studies of the Church Order.
7. Other appendices approved by previous Synods are referenced in this way throughout the Church Order.

8. The source of the website gives a helpful reminder where these documents may be found.

Classis Eastern US
Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk

Overture 2

Amend Church Order Article 48 with Reference to Marriage Affirmations

I. Background

In Synod 2018 ‘Affirmations Regarding Marriage’ was adopted as a Doctrinal Affirmation without dissent. Yet, this wonderful statement stands isolated in the minutes and on the website.

II. Overture

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod to add a parenthetical statement at the end of Article 48 in the Church Order: ‘*See Affirmations Regarding Marriage adopted at Synod 2018 for helpful guidelines at urcna.org.*’

Article 48 – Marriage

Scripture teaches that marriage is designed to be a lifelong, monogamous covenantal union between one man and one woman. Consistories shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry in the Lord. Christian marriages shall be solemnized with appropriate admonitions, promises, and prayers, under the regulation of the Consistory, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. Ministers shall not solemnize marriages that conflict with the Word of God. (*See Affirmations Regarding Marriage adopted at Synod 2018 for helpful guidelines at urcna.org.*)

Grounds:

1. This reference gives more aid to what ‘*marriages that conflict with the Word of God*’ means.
2. We have a helpful tool that was approved in Synod 2018 as a Doctrinal Affirmation. (see pp. 79-90 of Acts of Synod 2018)
3. Due to term eldership in many churches, it is difficult to depend on synodically-approved advice to carry on without some continual reference.
4. Future pastors, who may be unaware of this tool, would now have a reference in their studies of the Church Order.
5. Other appendices approved by previous Synods are referenced in this way throughout the Church Order.
6. The source of the website gives a helpful reminder where these documents may be found.

Overture 3 **Add Index of Synodical Decisions to URC Website**

I. Background

Classis Eastern U.S. adopted two overtures for Synod in the fall of 2019 to add parenthetical references to synodical actions within the Church Order. Upon further analysis and reflection, we thought it would be wise to give another option for pursuing a similar path. Rather than parenthetical statements within the Church Order, this motion pursues the path of an index that can be found on the URCNA website.

II. Overture

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod to add an Index of Synodical Decisions to the URCNA website.

Index of Synodical Decisions

This index includes particular actions of recommendation, referral, adoption, and advice.

Synod 1997 (St. Catharines)

Letter of Call

Letter of Minister's Consistorial Credential

Office of Deacon in the Churches Report

Synod 1999 (Hudsonville)

Form of Subscription

Synod 2001 (Escondido)

A Biblical and Confessional View of Missions Report

Synodical Affirmation of Creation in Genesis 1&2

URCNA-OPC Study Committee Report

Synod 2007 (Schererville)

Report Regarding Justification

Synod 2010 (London)

Federal Vision and Justification Report

Regulations for Synodical Procedure

Synod 2012 (Nyack)_

Report on the Level of Doctrinal Commitment Necessary

Report on the Synodical Study Committee on Missions

Synod 2014 (Visalia)

The Church Planting Manual of the URCNA

Synod 2016 (Wyoming)

Report on Membership Departures (see Church Order Appendix 8).

Synod 2018 (Wheaton)

Affirmations Regarding Marriage
Guidelines for Appeals (see Church Order Appendix 7).

Grounds:

1. These references on a website index give consistories more immediate access to an overview of synodical advice and recommendations.
2. Due to term eldership in many churches, it is difficult to depend on Synodically-approved advice to carry on without some continual reference.
3. Future pastors, who may be unaware of the advice/recommendations of previous Synods, would now be have a central reference point on the website.
4. Future Synodical decisions can be added to this overture for continuity.
5. The opening reference to the website gives a helpful reminder where these documents may be found.
6. This format gives the website committee the ability to update the index after each Synod.

Classis Eastern US
Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk

Overture 4
Add Appendix of Index of Synodical Decisions to Church Order

I. Background

Classis Eastern U.S. adopted two overtures for Synod in the fall of 2019 to add parenthetical references to synodical actions within the Church Order. Upon further analysis and reflection, we thought it would be wise to give another option for pursuing a similar path. In addition to parenthetical statements within the Church Order, this motion pursues the path of an appendix to the Church Order.

II. Overture

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod to add an Appendix ‘Index of Synodical Decisions’ to the Church Order of the URCNA:

Appendix 9
Index of Synodical Decisions

All references may be found on urcna.org under ‘Documents,’ ‘Synod,’ or ‘Missions’
This index includes particular actions of recommendation, referral, adoption, and advice.

Synod 1997 (St Catharines)

Letter of Call

Office of Deacon in the Churches Report

Synod 1999 (Hudsonville)

Form of Subscription

Synod 2001 (Escondido)

A Biblical and Confessional View of Missions Report
Synodical Affirmation of Creation in Genesis 1&2
URCNA-OPC Study Committee Report

Synod 2007 (Schererville)

Report Regarding Justification

Synod 2010 (London)

Federal Vision and Justification Report
Regulations for Synodical Procedure

Synod 2012 (Nyack)

Report on the Level of Doctrinal Commitment Necessary
Report on the Synodical Study Committee on Missions

Synod 2014 (Visalia)

The Church Planting Manual of the URCNA

Synod 2016 (Wyoming)

Report on Membership Departures (see Church Order Appendix 8)

Synod 2018 (Wheaton)

Affirmations Regarding Marriage
Guidelines for Appeals (see Church Order Appendix 7)

Grounds:

1. These references in a Church Order Appendix give consistories more immediate access to an overview of synodical advice and recommendations.
2. Due to term eldership in many churches, it is difficult to depend on Synodically-approved advice to carry on without some continual reference.
3. Future pastors, who may be unaware of the advice/recommendations of previous Synods, would now be have a reference in their studies of the Church Order.
4. Future Synodical decisions can be added to this overture for continuity.
5. The opening reference to the website gives a helpful reminder where these documents may be found.

Classis Eastern US

Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk

Overture 5
Amend Church Order 10 Regarding Church Planters

I. Background

As we at Zeltenreich Reformed Church have recently been sought to oversee works of missions and church planting, we have been left with questions that our consistory thought we could not answer. What should happen if a mission/church plant ends? What promises should be made for oversight from the outset?

II. Overture

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod to add the following to the Church Order:

10.2 – The Support and Necessary Release of Church Planting Ministers

When for practical reasons and in the sorrowful circumstances that a church plant/mission work is no longer progressing to a sustainable end, and the overseeing council of the overseeing congregation desires to dissolve the church plant/mission work, that dissolution may occur only when all the following conditions have been met:

- a. before the church plant/mission work officially begins, the overseeing consistory and church planter/missionary shall have a written understanding in the letter of call that describes how the overseeing church will care for the church planter/missionary if their church plant/mission work comes to an end;
- b. this written understanding in the letter of call shall include the time period of financial support after a church plant/mission work ends, and it should describe the overseeing church's intent either to continue using the church planter/missionary in their own work or announcing his eligibility for a call;
- c. should an overseeing church and/or church planter/missionary desire to dissolve the church plant/mission work, this dissolution shall occur only with the concurring advice of classis
- d. this request for concurring advice is to ensure that the care promised in the letter of call is being upheld, and that the overseeing council's provision for support of the church planter/missionary and his family is known to the classis.

The council of the overseeing congregation with which the church plant/mission work has ended shall announce his eligibility for call. This eligibility shall be valid for at least two years, where after it shall be under the overseeing consistory's discernment to extend the eligibility or honorably discharge the church planter/missionary from office.

Grounds:

1. There is a need for more guidance in our church planting process than articles 22 and 47 provide.
2. Without more guidance in the church order, both parties (church planters/missionaries and overseeing churches) may be hesitant to pursue these opportunities.
3. This motion would open a door for a church planter/missionary should their church plant/mission work end.
4. With the current articles 10 and 11 already in place, there are many helpful similarities that can be followed if a church planter/missionary must find another call.
5. This could open the door for more willingness from organized churches to oversee these church plants/ mission works.
6. This could open the door for more willingness from church planters/missionaries to pursue paths of church planting/mission work.

Classis Eastern US
Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk

Overture 6

Add List of URCNA Pulpit Vacancies to Website

I. Background

Currently, there is no officially maintained list of vacant pulpits in the URCNA, though the Stated Clerk informally keeps a list and shares it upon request.

This overture would request that Synod see to the maintenance and publication of such a list on the urcna.org website. Synod could work with the Stated Clerk, Statistician, and Webmaster to determine how best to assign responsibilities to ensure that an up to date list is easily available.

II. Overture

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod to maintain and publish an official list of URCNA pulpit vacancies.

1. Delegates gathered at Synod shall determine which functionary — Stated Clerk, Statistician, or Webmaster — should be assigned the responsibility of maintaining an official list of vacancies.
2. Synod shall ensure that the list is maintained in an up-to-date fashion on the publicly available portion of the website by assigning responsibilities for doing so to appropriate parties.

Grounds:

1. Additional information about vacancies may aid in the filling of these pulpits in a timely fashion and increase the likelihood of filling them with a suitable candidate.
2. The federation should make known as widely as possible the need for ministers, to keep before us all the need to maintain “the gospel ministry and the schools for it” (HC Q&A 103).
3. Current vacancies provide important information for those studying to enter the ministry and considering seeking calls in the URCNA.
4. Vacancies should be a constant concern of prayer for the churches.

Classis Eastern US
Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk

Overture 7

Appoint Committee for Choral Recordings of TPH Psalms

I. Background

We give thanks that the Lord has provided the URCNA with a new *Trinity Psalter Hymnal (TPH)* to share with our brothers and sisters in the OPC and believers around the world. We also rejoice in the faithfulness of all those who have labored in its production. The Lord has

truly endowed with his Spirit craftsmen to adorn his temple with praise, and we are very thankful for the popularity and success of this songbook thus far. Praise God.

The publication of the *TPH* presents a unique opportunity to spread faithful, God-glorifying worship music, both within our own communions and to the broader church. While significant efforts are already underway to further the reach of this project — including digital files and a mobile app — a choral recording of key psalm settings in the *TPH* has great potential to deepen and broaden the impact of this great labor.

There is precedent for this kind of work. In 1999, after the publication of the *Trinity Psalter*, Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia undertook the recording of two high quality volumes of Psalms from this collection. *Psalms of the Trinity Psalter, Vols. I and II*, featuring the Scottish Festival Singers. These audio resources remain available to the church and continue to introduce new audiences as well as familiarize current audiences with the beauty and grandeur of Psalm singing.¹

One unique benefit of the *TPH* is that many OPC and PCA churches that lack a strong psalm singing tradition are buying the book as an upgrade and replacement for the *Trinity Hymnal*. Thus, there is an even greater opportunity to introduce new audiences to the psalter portion of the book.

Conversations regarding such recordings have already taken place among former Psalter-Hymnal committee members, increasing the likelihood of a rapid and relatively low-cost implementation of this project. This overture would leave many details up to those responsible for implementation in order to give them flexibility, including the selection of specific tunes. However, it should be noted that due to the fact that our Psalter collection uses a number of popular tunes repeatedly, recording approximately 40 key tunes could easily cover over half of the Psalms in the psalter.

II. Overture

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod to facilitate the choral recording of select psalms from the *TPH* by doing the following:

1. Appoint three men to serve on an ad hoc *TPH Choral Recording* committee to oversee the production of a choral recording of the Psalms, recording approximately 30 – 40 songs for distribution. The committee's mandate would be as follows:
 - i. Identify appropriate musicians to oversee the technical matter of producing high quality choral recordings in a style that emphasizes both the musical and verbal beauty of our Psalter collection;
 - ii. Select key Psalms to record, including selection criteria such as beauty, theological significance, popularity, frequency of tune usage, etc.;
 - iii. Work with the *TPH* Joint Venture Committee to ensure that appropriate permissions are secured, consistent branding is produced, and proper distribution that complements the current print and digital production;

¹ Note that the tunes recorded in the *Psalms of the Trinity Psalter* has some overlap with the *TPH*, but the words are invariably different settings than our collection. For audio, see: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_kqCBj0_jZqWLq3YAT--1KvI9VdOCutQI8

- iv. Securing widespread distribution via top streaming platforms (Spotify, YouTube, AmazonMusic, others as advisable) and producing physical CD's only if they are deemed necessary and cost beneficial.
2. Direct the *TPH* Joint Venture Committee of the URCNA-OPC to coordinate with this work with the *TPH Choral Recording* committee in the following:
 - i. Advising and securing legal permissions for recording purposes;
 - ii. Allocating promotional funds as appropriate from committee resources;
 - iii. Coordinating consistent branding.
3. Provide necessary funding for the recording, production, and distribution of these choral recordings, up to \$10,000 USD as necessary. If funds are available from the *TPH* Joint Venture Committee, these should be used as appropriate to defray the costs of this production.

Grounds:

1. Choral recordings will assist our churches in learning the music of the new songbook.
2. Choral recordings will serve to promote the *TPH*, and expand the impact of this work, thereby increasing the harvest from this investment of labor and resources, and potentially increasing sales of this already popular songbook.
3. Choral recordings will introduce and increase familiarity with the psalter collection in particular, which is unfamiliar to many of the users of the *TPH* who have never used a *Psalter Hymnal* before.
4. Choral recordings will bring pleasure, beauty, and increased familiarity with God's word to the daily lives of the members of our churches.
5. Choral recordings will introduce the new psalter portion of our songbook to many contemporary musicians outside the Reformed tradition who are seeking excellent settings of biblical psalms.
6. High quality choral recordings will manifest to the world that we treasure excellence in our worship and rejoice in the beauty of congregational singing.
7. Choral recordings of the psalter will make the worship of our churches visible on digital music streaming services, one of the most common and popular entertainment channels in the broader culture, bearing witness to the glory of God's word and the worship of his saints.

Classis Eastern US
 Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk

Overture 8

Amend Appendix 8 Regarding Sermon

I. Background

It is the practice of Classis Ontario-East to include a sermon review element in our Ordination exams. Our Classical Rules and Procedures stipulate and detail this element, both for

the delegates and for the one being examined. This requirement is not as significant as in the Candidacy exam, i.e., there is only one sermon (not three). This emphasis on preaching does not call in to question previous examinations, any more than the other areas of an Ordination exam call into question the Candidacy exam. Rather, the inclusion of a sermon review gives expression to our conviction that preaching remains at the heart of the minister's task. Having benefited from this practice for the past number of years and believing that standardizing this practice across the Federation would be beneficial, it seems wise to us to recommend this change to our Church Order.

II. Overture

Classis Ontario-East overtures Synod 2021 to amend Appendix 4 of our Church Order by inserting at point 3 the following:

- a. Sermon Review: The Consistory convening the Classis shall appoint a Consistory other than the calling Consistory to examine a sermon of the minister elect. The sermon text shall be assigned by the Consistory examining the sermon. The sermon evaluation shall be based on a sermon preached in a public worship service. The manuscript of the minister-elect's sermon shall be distributed by the Convening Consistory to the churches of the Classis at least three weeks before the date of the proposed examination. The examining Consistory shall provide the delegates to the Classis with a written evaluation of the content and delivery of the sermon, including their recommendation that the Classis either proceed, or, not proceed with the examination, on the basis of their evaluation.

(What is currently point 3 in the Appendix would become 3.b.)

Grounds:

1. Such a review emphasizes the importance of preaching in the work of those ordained to the Ministry of the Word.
2. Such a review is in keeping with the nature of an Ordination exam which reviews the vital topics of a Candidacy exam.
3. This would standardize this practice across the Federation.

Classis Ontario East
Rev. Joel Dykstra, Stated Clerk

Overture 9 Amend LS Form 1

I. Background

The new Forms and Prayers book includes four forms for the celebration of the Lord's Supper: two long forms and two short forms. The first long form in the new F&P book includes a list of sins, those guilty of which are admonished to "abstain from coming to the Table of the Lord".

The new Form 1 includes each of the 10 commandments except the 4th: “Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy”. In contrast, the list of sins in Form 2 of the Blue Psalter Hymnal included the violation of the 4th commandment: “all who desecrate the Lord’s Day”. It also included “liars” which is not found in the new Form 1.

II. Overture

- A. Classis Southwestern Ontario overtures Synod Redeemer 2020 to direct the insertion of the text “all who desecrate the Lord’s Day;” into the long Form 1 for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper following the words: “all blasphemers;” and to make this change to the official, posted, electronic form and any future printings of the F&P book and thus direct the churches to adopt this amendment into their reading of Form #1.

Grounds:

1. The entire decalogue was woven into Form 2 of the Blue Psalter Hymnal.
2. The 4th commandment is the only commandment that is not included in the new F&P Form #1.
3. Since the Lord’s Day is largely disregarded in the time in which we are living, its inclusion in the form is a helpful testimony to both our members and guests, as to the continuing relevance, importance, and status of this commandment.

- B. Classis Southwestern Ontario overtures Synod Redeemer 2020 to direct the insertion of the text “and liars” into the long Form 1 for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper between the text “all perjurers” and the semicolon and to make this change to the official, posted, electronic form and any future printings of the F&P book and thus direct the churches to insert this amendment into their reading of Form #1.

Grounds:

1. “Liars” was included in Form 2 of the Blue Psalter Hymnal.
2. The commandment “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour” is not addressed fully in the Form, being addressed only in the legal context of perjury.
3. In its exposition of the 9th commandment, Lord’s Day 43 includes “every kind of lying”.

Classis Southwestern Ontario
Mr. Ed Gazendam, Stated Clerk

Overture 10 **Amend CO Art. 47 Regarding Seeking Advice About Missionaries**

I. Background

Synod Wyoming 2018 mandated the URCNA Missions Committee to research the models of missions taken within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the older Christian

Reformed Church, and the current URCNA Joint Venture Agreement model. The task assigned to the Missions Committee was, “To see if they are feasible for the URC to use for our missionary endeavors, and if so to make specific recommendations for how we can do this” (Acts of Synod 2018; Minutes, Art. 76.7).

In the recommendations the Missions Committee is considering is a recommended change to the URCNA Church Order. Because the Church Order must be changed by overtures from the churches (not from standing committees), this overture was brought to Classis Southwestern Ontario so it can come before Synod 2020 in an orderly and proper way.

Classis Southwestern Ontario would also note that this change to Article 47 stands alone as a good idea to improve cooperation among the churches in our missionary endeavors. Whether the proposals from the Missions Committee are accepted by the Synod or not, changing Article 47 in the way proposed still bears wisdom to grow our mutual accountability in serving Christ faithfully.

II. Overture

Classis Southwestern Ontario overtures Synod Redeemer 2020 to change Article 47 of the Church Order by adding the phrase, “A local Consistory shall seek the advice of Classis before sending or removing a foreign or domestic missionary from a field.” The new church order would read as follows, with the italicized words given to highlight the change.

Article 47 – The Church’s Mission Calling

The church's missionary task is to preach the Word of God to the unconverted. When this task is to be performed beyond the field of an organized church, it is to be carried out by ministers of the Word set apart to this labor, who are called, supported and supervised by their Consistories. *A local Consistory shall seek the advice of classis before sending or removing a foreign or domestic missionary from a field.* The churches should assist each other in the support of their missionaries.

Grounds:

1. Our churches have agreed to “make every effort to unify all of our resources (gifts, talents, and finances) as one united federation in order to bring the gospel from our homes and churches to the nations of the world.”² Our commitment to unity would be enhanced and displayed through this codified change to our Church Order.
2. To wisely send a man to the foreign field requires significant consideration and generally commits the federation to ministry in an area of the world for a considerable period of time. Having a broad base of support, agreement, and advice is an invaluable step to seeing this done well among our churches, whether this be the first man sent to a field or an additional man sent to help reinforce the work that is already going.
3. We have agreed on page 9 in our church planting manual (“How to Plant a Reformed Church”) that sending a man to begin a new work domestically should be done with the advice and awareness of the Classis. Requiring this advice in our Church Order helps a greater representation of the federation to be involved and

² *Acts of Synod Nyack 2012*, pp. 516-517.

- supportive of the growing mission in the URCNA and gives good and helpful accountability to local Consistories eager to begin new mission works.
4. Removing a missionary from a field (foreign or domestic) has significant consequences for the missionary and the church/field where he served. Requiring the concurring advice of Classis protects both the missionary and the field that we, as a federation, have supported.
 5. Article 11 of our Church Order recognizes the seriousness of dissolving a relationship between a pastor and a congregation. However, within the range of missions and church planting, there is no protection or safeguards in place for the well-being of either the missionary or the believers (and community) that this man may have served. This Church Order change would recognize that, equally in a mission, a minister's call is weighty and should not be changed without the input of the classis.
 6. The inclusion of this line before the statement, "The churches should assist each other in the support of their missionaries," presents the advice of Classis in a positive light that reminds us this advice is sought as we seek to support our missionaries. Having the advice of Classis before sending a man to a field increases the base of support within the URC for each of our prospective missions.

Classis Southwestern Ontario
Mr. Ed Gazendam, Stated Clerk

Overture 11

Amend CO Art. 31 Regarding Appeals by Church Members

I. Background

Synod 2018 adopted Appendix 7 "Guidelines for Appeals" as an appendix to the Church Order. Appendix 7 begins with the following introduction: "In accord with *Church Order*, Articles 29 and 31, the following guidelines must be observed in preparing and adjudicating an appeal. These guidelines shall serve as the standard for admissibility of an appeal."

After defining what an appeal is, the guidelines specify which parties may file an appeal. Appendix 7, Guideline 1 states in part: "Any consistory or church member may appeal against a decision of any assembly of the federation." The guidelines then proceed to specify where an appeal ought to be filed first. Appendix 7, Guideline 2 states in part: "An appeal must first be made to the assembly whose decision is being appealed before appealing to broader assemblies." The guidelines for appeals seem clear that any consistory or church member may appeal the decision of any assembly of the federation directly to that assembly.

However, Church Order, Article 31 states that an appeal by a church member to a broader assembly must originate with a consistory. Article 31 reads in pertinent part: "An individual's appeal must proceed first to the Consistory, and only then, if necessary, to a broader assembly."

The language of Church Order, Article 31 and of Appendix 7, Guidelines 1 and 2 creates the potential for confusion. If a church member alleges that a decision of a broader assembly has been made in error and that he or she has been wronged by that decision, should an appeal be filed directly with the broader assembly or must the appeal first be filed with a consistory?

The clearly stated intention of the churches was to make guidelines for appeals that were in accord with Church Order, Articles 29 and 31. This overture seeks to bring further clarity to the matter of the origination of appeals by amending Church Order, Article 31.

II. Overture

Classis Southwest U.S. overtures Synod to amend Church Order, Article 31 as follows:

Remove the word “Consistory” in the second sentence and replace it with the phrase “assembly whose decision is being appealed”.

Current wording:

Article 31 - Appeals by Church Members

If any church member complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a narrower assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the broader assemblies. An individual’s appeal must proceed first to the Consistory, and only then, if necessary, to a broader assembly. Until a decision is made upon such appeal, the church member shall conform to the determination and judgment already passed.

(See Appendix 7)

Wording as amended (deletions struck-through; additions underlined):

Article 31 - Appeals by Church Members

If any church member complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a narrower assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the broader assemblies. An individual’s appeal must proceed first to the ~~Consistory~~ assembly whose decision is being appealed, and only then, if necessary, to a broader assembly. Until a decision is made upon such appeal, the church member shall conform to the determination and judgment already passed. *(See Appendix 7)*

Grounds:

1. The proposed amendment would help remove any potential for misunderstanding that currently exists between Church Order, Article 31 and Appendix 7, Guidelines 1 and 2.
2. The proposed amendment uses the same language already approved by Synod in Appendix 7, Guideline 2.
3. The proposed amendment would remove any appearance that the Church Order can be or has been changed by way of an appendix.
4. Article 31 as amended would better serve the churches by giving further clarity to the appeal process.
5. The appeal process is a matter that pertains to the churches of the broader assembly in common. As has been previously expressed by our churches: “The appeal process is worth taking time to improve and strengthen, as it is closely related to upholding righteousness and justice among the churches of Christ represented within our federation, and as our decisions as a church reflect our only Head, the Lord Jesus

Christ” (Acts of Synod 2016, Article 70, pp. 73-74).

Classis Southwest US
Rev. Michael Spotts, Stated Clerk

Overture 12

Form New Missions Committee with New Mandate and Guidelines

I. Background

The rule of the church by Christ, through elders who serve locally: it’s one of the emphases which distinguishes our federation of churches. In fact, we have enshrined it as one of the *Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government* which is appended to our Church Order³ – a handy reminder of what we believe concerning the government of the church.

This is a refreshing distinctive, given the many examples in church history of power being entrusted to an individual or a small group; the holders of power embracing corruption; and the corruption spreading from those powerbrokers to the church placed in their care.

When considering the establishment and supervision of missions, many of us – when serving in former denominations – have seen the fruit of entrusting the supervision and funding of missions to a denominational committee. Because it is easier for folks at the local level to allow the committee to “take care of it,” local church involvement in missions waned. Interest in events on the mission field likewise entered a slow decline. And rather than holding the missionaries accountable for maintaining and promoting faithful doctrine, the committees too-often introduced weak or false doctrine into the mission field.

Of course, supervising mission works locally can be quite difficult, making it seem attractive to simply entrust the work to a committee of men who specialize in missions. After all, it is difficult to develop and maintain a plan for missions. It is a significant undertaking to develop the necessary expertise in missionary oversight and in the targeted mission field. Finding volunteers to participate in the supervision process can be an ongoing struggle.

However: all of this is completely *do-able*. And, by God’s mercy, local supervision of mission works can be a rich blessing!

Here in Pella, we supervise a brother who serves as a missionary and church planter in Quito, Ecuador. In preparing to call and send him, we faced a steep learning curve which demanded quite a bit of reading, interviewing, and discussing. But engaging in that work turned out to be a rich blessing! The process enabled us to learn and become more passionate about missions. It enabled us to spend time with the man whom we sought to call, so that the whole congregation came to know and deeply love both him and his family. And it convinced us that God is able and willing to equip His church for the mission work to which He has called us. As a result, we have seen the congregation grow in its zeal for *all* mission works, while cultivating a particular love for our missionary and the field in which we have called him to work.

³ “The Lord gave no permanent universal, national or regional offices to His church. The office of elder (presbyter/episkopos) is clearly local in authority and function; thus, Reformed church government is presbyterial, since the church is governed by elders, not by broader assemblies. Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; Titus 1:5.” *Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government*, Principle #5.

However, in recent years, we have seen a drive on the part of our URCNA Missions Committee to centralize supervision of the mission works of our churches. While the committee's preliminary proposal to Synod 2020⁴ emphasizes that sending consistories would continue to oversee "the life and doctrine of the missionary," the Committee aims to delegate the work of "providing all mission works (foreign and domestic) with administrative oversight" to a committee beyond the consistory. As we read the latest proposal, this would remove the sending consistory from the task of supervising the day-to-day the work of the mission.

In addition, our URCNA Missions Committee is again proposing a "Federation Missions Fund," similar to that which was rejected at Synod 2018. Again, this would remove the sending church from the task of supervising the mission – because he who controls the finances controls the work.

These proposals represent a substantial departure from the missions model that our churches have employed until this time. We would argue that it also is a substantial departure from the Reformed polity expressed in Foundational Principle #5, appended to our Church Order.

While we recognize that entering into and sustaining the supervision of a mission work can be a substantial task for a congregation, we already have the means of sharing that work through the use of joint venture committees, which have served well for several of our mission works. Joint venture committees have the added benefit of being initiated by the sending consistory, according to the perceived need locally. This preserves the consistory's initiative in seeking cooperation in its supervisory task.

We do not mean to suggest that the churches are not called to cooperate in the work of missions. However, we strongly believe that supervision of the mission should be maintained at the local level – not delegated to a committee that is removed from the local church. As Reformed missions authority J.H. Bavinck wrote in *Introduction to the Science of Missions*,⁵ That the work of missions should be conducted by the local church is not only sound in theory, but also preferable on practical grounds. It is much easier to quicken love of missions in a relatively small group that has taken the responsibility of a very particular, concrete objective, than it is to inspire a larger group of churches to a large and therefore vague task. It goes without saying that it is necessary for local churches to work closely together and to consult each other on all important issues.

As originally conceived, our federational Missions Committee was to function in support of the mission works of the local churches – not as an intermediate step to creating supervisory structures that are removed from the local church. Thus the mandate of our Missions Committee was to serve "as an information hub for URCNA missions, encouraging communication among URCNA missionaries, church planters, councils, joint venture committees, and congregations."⁶ This work was to include tasks focused on the gathering and dissemination of information that would assist *the churches themselves* in pursuing the work of missions. However, Synod Wyoming 2016 amended the *Policies for the Synodical Missions Committee and Missions Coordinator*, adding to its mandate the task to *facilitate cooperation* in the work of missions. This has been used to justify a much more active advisory role by our Missions Committee.

⁴ This observation is based on the "URCNA Missions Plan 2020" communication which was distributed to the churches in November 2019.

⁵ Bavinck, J.H., *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, Trans. David Hugh Freeman (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1960), p.60.

⁶ Acts of Synod Nyack 2012, Art. 85; Synod 2012 Agenda p.376.

Our proposal would seek to revise the vision and calling of our URCNA Missions Committee to emphasize its role as a *support* for the *churches' work of missions*, by disseminating information (primary) and offering counsel only as requested by a particular church. That is the purpose of this overture.

It is our hope that the changes outlined below will serve to safeguard in our mission works the role of the consistories (or the joint venture committees they establish) in governing the missionary ventures of the churches.

II. Overture

The Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church overtures Classis Central US to overture Synod 2020 to adopt the following measures.

- A. Dismiss the current members of the URCNA Missions Committee, with thanks for their diligent service.

Grounds:

1. It seems clear from the proposals to Synod Wheaton 2018 and the draft proposals for Synod 2020 that current Missions Committee members are committed to a view of missions supervision that is more Presbyterian than Reformed in nature. Asking them to serve under revised guidelines could be regarded as asking them to compromise their beliefs, which would be unfair to them.
2. The drive of the existing URCNA Missions Committee for supervising and supporting missions at the level of the broader assemblies detracts from an important principle of Reformed polity: the direct authority of the Consistory (CO Art. 21). Scripture neither commands nor demonstrates supervision of the ministry by committees (*Foundational Principle #5*), but rather demonstrates calling and supervision of missionary and ministerial work through the local church (Acts 13:1-3). We honor that example by preserving the direct supervision by the consistories of our missionaries and mission works (cf. CO Art. 14 & Art. 47).
3. Article 47 of our Church Order reserves supervision of the missionary task beyond the field of an organized church to the consistories, which also are to call and support those missionaries. While the churches are urged to assist each other in the support of our missionaries, the current direction of our URCNA Missions Committee departs substantially from the view of missions and mission supervision that we have expressed in our Church Order.
4. The current members of the Committee have served honorably and honestly, and therefore their work deserves a hearty expression of our appreciation.

- B. Establish a new URCNA Missions Committee, with the Mandate set forth below.

Grounds:

1. This Mandate would re-establish the Missions Committee on the foundation adopted in 2012, when the Missions Committee was created. That foundation emphasized fostering communication concerning missions works, while offering no

hint that our mission works were to submit to supervision apart from the consistories.

2. This Mandate re-establishes the Committee's focus on disseminating information, thereby helping to unify and equip the churches for their missionary task.
3. This Mandate preserves the calling of the consistories to supervise all aspects of the ministry of the Word.
4. This Mandate helps to alleviate the sense of standing alone that formerly plagued many of our member congregations, missionaries, and church planters.

Mandate for the URCNA Missions Committee:

The URCNA Missions Committee is to function as an information hub for URCNA missions, both foreign and domestic, encouraging communication among URCNA missionaries, church planters, consistories, councils, joint venture committees, and congregations.

- C. Adopt the Guidelines for the URCNA Missions Committee set forth below.

Grounds:

1. These Guidelines reflect and focus the Committee's prescribed focus on disseminating information, thereby helping to unify and equip the churches.
2. These Guidelines would preserve the calling of the consistories to supervise all aspects of the ministry of the Word.
3. These Guidelines would ensure that the churches were made aware of the financial needs of our missions works, so that we might better support those works.
4. These Guidelines would encourage the Committee to establish a repository of resources that could prove to be invaluable in teaching and guiding consistories that desire to engage in missionary work.
5. These Guidelines would ensure that the very helpful biennial missions conferences will continue to be organized.
6. The provision prohibiting the Committee from proposing changes to the Church Order or its own Mandate or Guidelines will protect against potential attempts to aggregate power by the Committee in future years.

Guidelines for the URCNA Missions Committee:

- (a) The Committee shall obtain regular updates from URCNA missionaries and church planters, from their respective consistories, and from any joint venture committees or other supervisory organizations to which they are accountable. These updates are to be published regularly in the missions newsletter, in the monthly prayer list and annual prayer map, and on the missions page of the urcnamissions.org website, in a manner that best serves the churches.
- (b) The Committee shall ascertain and remain abreast of the financial needs of missionaries, disseminating pertinent information to URCNA councils (including details such as location, family, nature, and needs of a particular ministry).
- (c) The Committee shall generally promote the cause of missions in the URCNA in a way that consistently represents our commitment to assist each other in the support of our missionaries (Church Order Art. 47).

- (d) The Committee shall gather information about the work of missions and church planting within the URCNA, including both what has worked well and what has worked badly, to be shared with consistories, councils, and joint venture committees that are supervising or are considering the supervision of mission works.
- (e) The Committee shall make available to the churches copies of the *Biblical and Confessional Basis for Missions*, printed in booklet form.
- (f) Upon the request of consistories, councils, joint venture committees, or missionaries, the Committee shall delegate a team of its members to visit and offer advice concerning the calling and sending of missionaries, planning and supervision of mission works, or mediation of difficulties on the mission field.
- (g) The Committee shall organize a biennial conference for URCNA office-bearers to provide education and encouragement concerning missions, church planting, evangelism, and outreach.
- (h) The Committee shall not propose or recommend changes to the Church Order or to its own Mandate or Guidelines.
- (i) The Committee shall provide a report of its work in the agenda for each synod.

D. Rename the position of Missions Coordinator as Missions Information Coordinator, and adopt new Guidelines for the Missions Information Coordinator set forth below.

Grounds:

1. This revised name better reflects the position's emphasis on information dissemination.
2. These Guidelines establish the secretarial and diaconal focus of the Coordinator's role.
3. These Guidelines would ensure that there is someone who is able to address questions regarding URCNA mission work, directing concerns or requests for counsel to the appropriate members of the Committee.
4. These Guidelines would help to protect the Coordinator from being regarded as a supervisor or director of missions for our federation.

Guidelines for the URCNA Missions Information Coordinator:

- (a) The Missions Information Coordinator shall be called and supervised in his doctrine and life by his consistory. His work will be supervised by the URCNA Missions Committee, which shall regularly correspond with the Coordinator's consistory concerning that work.
- (b) The Missions Information Coordinator shall maintain contact with domestic and foreign missionaries.
- (c) The Missions Information Coordinator shall maintain regular contact with calling churches, joint venture committees, and classis missions committees to learn of their current needs and of the financial status of their mission work.
- (d) The Missions Information Coordinator shall encourage congregations to financially support foreign and domestic missions, reminding the churches of the priority that such works should receive over para-church organizations.

- (e) Upon the request of consistories, councils, joint venture committees, or missionaries, the Missions Information Coordinator shall visit missionaries for encouragement and to offer advice.
- (f) The Missions Information Coordinator shall assist the URCNA Missions Committee in its assigned tasks, particularly:
 - a. The work of publishing updates regarding the URCNA's missions works and the financial status of those works.
 - b. The archiving of information concerning missions-related methods that have been employed by our churches.
 - c. Organizing the biennial educational conference.
- (g) The Missions Information Coordinator shall receive inquiries concerning potential missions opportunities and shall connect inquirers with consistories, joint venture committees, or classis missions committees that may be able to address the opportunities.
- (h) The Missions Information Coordinator shall direct potential financial donors to missions works that are experiencing financial need.
- (i) The Missions Information Coordinator shall provide a report of his work in the agenda for each synod.

E. Adopt new Qualifications for URCNA Missions Committee Members and for the Missions Information Coordinator, set forth below.

Grounds:

1. These Qualifications spell out clearly the process for appointing and retaining men for the Missions Committee and for the Missions Information Coordinator.
2. By staffing the Committee with those who possess current or past experience serving on or supervising mission fields, the Committee will be well equipped to respond to consistories that seek counsel for establishing and maintaining missions.
3. The specified terms for the Committee members would encourage a regular turnover of representation, while still encouraging continuity on the Committee.
4. Classis involvement in bringing forward nominees will encourage the churches to seek consensus in nominating well-qualified men to serve on the Committee and as the Coordinator.
5. A full-time Coordinator will better enable the Committee to fulfill its mandate and will ensure that the Committee is always able to be reached by those who need counsel or who seek to provide help to mission works.

Qualifications for URCNA Missions Committee Members:

- (a) Composition of Committee:
 - a. Three current or former foreign missionaries.
 - b. Three current or former domestic missionaries.
 - c. Six elders who serve or have served on consistories that supervise missionaries or joint venture committees that supervise missionaries.
- (b) Means of Appointment:
 - a. All nominees to serve on the Committee must be ordained either as elders or as ministers in URCNA congregations (including emeritated ministers).

- b. An elder must be actively serving when appointed, but he may continue serving after his elder term concludes.
 - c. Nominations to serve on the Committee may be brought by any classis or may be proposed by the Committee itself.
 - d. The synod shall select among the nominees, ensuring that the composition of the Committee remains as stated above. Appointments in each category shall be made by majority vote of synod, taken by ballot.
- (c) Term of Appointment:
- a. The term of service for Committee members shall be six years. (These terms should be staggered to ensure that only one-third of each category that comprises the Committee is replaced at any time.)
 - b. Each Committee member shall be eligible for reappointment once.
 - c. An elder serving on the Committee may be reappointed beyond his elder term with the approval of his consistory.

Qualifications for URCNA Missions Information Coordinator:

- (a) Means of Appointment:
- a. Due to the extensive nature of the work, Missions Information Coordinator is to be considered a full-time position.
 - b. The Missions Information Coordinator must be serving or must have served as an office-bearer in a URCNA congregation.
 - i. Because his duties do not require preaching, the position need not be filled by a minister.
 - ii. Because there is no supervisory aspect to this role, the position may be filled by a deacon.
 - c. Nominations must come via classis. Nominations shall include:
 - i. A statement by the consistory that is prepared to supervise the doctrine and life of the nominee. If a minister, he may already be serving that church; or the church may be prepared to extend a call to him, pending his appointment to the position of Missions Information Coordinator by synod.
 - ii. A compensation plan for the Missions Information Coordinator in his work. The compensation plan should focus on honorable provision of salary, housing, medical, and retirement needs, based on the cost of living in the area of the calling church, as well as suggested amounts for office, equipment, and travel needs. The URCNA Missions Committee will make itself available to interested churches to help set ballpark figures in this regard. Details of the proposed compensation will be subject to the approval of synod.
 - iii. A brief introduction to the nominee, which should include a resume of service in the church and of the particular gifts and experience that the nominee would bring to the position of Missions Information Coordinator.
 - d. From the pool of nominees, synod shall elect a Missions Information Coordinator. Election shall be by majority vote, taken by ballot.

- (b) Term of Appointment: The Missions Information Coordinator shall ordinarily serve a term of no less than three years, established by the synod. The Missions Information Coordinator shall be eligible for re-election by a subsequent synod, without term limit restrictions.
- (c) Reappointment of the Missions Information Coordinator:
 - a. With the approval of the Missions Information Coordinator and his consistory, and upon receiving input from the URCNA Missions Committee, the Missions Information Coordinator may be reappointed by a two-thirds majority vote at the first synod that is at least three years from his previous appointment.
 - b. Should a classis of the federation believe that the missions of the URCNA may be further prospered through the appointment of a new Missions Information Coordinator, any classis of the federation may nominate another office-bearer to the position. Such a nomination must follow the guidelines listed above, under point (a)c. On such an occasion, the nomination shall be considered by the churches at the first synod that is at least three years from the last appointment of the Missions Information Coordinator. The appointment of a new Missions Information Coordinator requires a two-thirds majority vote of the synod.

F. Request that the churches submit nominations for men to serve on the URCNA Missions Committee, with nominations to be received and acted upon at Synod 2022.

Grounds:

1. Nominations are needed to staff the newly constituted committee.
2. The churches are in the best position to know which men are gifted and willing to serve on the Committee.
3. A delay of two years between establishing the new Mandate and Guidelines and the appointment of men to serve on the Committee will provide a reasonable opportunity for the classes to locate and bring forward men who are qualified and willing to serve.

NOTE: This overture was submitted to Classis Central US but was not adopted.

Appeal 1

To: Rev. Ralph Pontier, Stated Clerk

To: Clerk of Convening Consistory of Synod 2020 (Wellandport United Reformed Church):

And now, this November 22, 2019, comes Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes and appeal the judgment or decision of Classis Eastern U.S. in the matter of the adoption of an overture which provides that portions of a candidacy examination be conducted in written form administered and graded outside a meeting of classis Eastern U.S. and outside the presence and hearing of the delegates at a meeting of classis.

Provided with this this Appeal are the following:

1. *Notice of Appeal filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on May 1, 2019*
2. *Appeal filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on May 3, 2019, with attachments including the decision of Classis Eastern U.S. which is being appealed.*
3. *Relevant portion of the Minutes of the October 16, 2019 meeting of Classis Eastern U.S. reflecting their disposition of the Appeal*
4. *Notice of Appeal filed with the Stated Clerk and Clerk of Convening Consistory for Synod 2020 on November 15, 2019.*

In support of said Appeal, the appellants state that Classis Eastern U.S. committed the following error:

1. Specification of Error #1: The decision violates the letter and spirit of the Church Order requirement that a candidacy exam be conducted at a meeting of classis in the presence and hearing of delegates to such meeting.

Grounds:

- a) The Church Order repeatedly states that a candidacy examination be conducted “**at** a meeting of classis”. [Emphasis added] *.C.O. Article 4.*
- b) The “Guidelines for a Candidacy Exam” specifies that a consistory must request a “meeting of classis **for the exam**”. [Emphasis added]. *C.O. Appendix 3, par. 2(a).*
- c) The “Guidelines for a Candidacy Exam” specifies that upon passing the candidacy exam, waiver of an ordination exam can occur if the candidate were to receive a call within that classis: “Taking note of that possibility, the delegates **hearing the candidacy exam** should determine whether the performance is sufficient to warrant such a waiver.” [Emphasis added]. *C.O. Appendix 3, par. 2 (e).*

- d) Throughout the history of our federation, our churches in every classis have uniformly conducted candidacy examinations by way of oral examinations performed and heard in the presence of delegates at a meeting of classis.
- e) The decision disrupts the unity in our federation’s practice by introducing a method unique to Classis Eastern U.S., consisting of written examinations administered and graded outside the presence or hearing of delegates at a meeting of classis. This decision also sets a precedent for other classes to introduce disparate examination methods. Furthermore, the decision allows but does not require *any* oral examination of the candidate at a meeting of Classis Eastern U.S on the sections assigned for the written examination. “The churches of the federation, although distinct, voluntarily display their unity by means of a common confession and church order.”
Introduction to the Church Order.
- f) The question of whether the decision has any merit to warrant changing the federation’s adopted procedure for candidacy exams is not the dispositive issue for consideration of this appeal. Rather, the decision has preemptively bypassed the good and orderly method for *all* the churches of *every* classis to consider the merits or demerits⁷ of a new procedure, *i.e.*, presenting a carefully crafted overture to change or add specific provisions to the Church Order, adopted by a 2/3 vote at a meeting of Synod, and thereafter ratified by 2/3 of the consistories of the federation. *C.O. Article 66.*

Date: November 22, 2019

Mark Van Der Molen, Appellant
Immanuel URC, DeMotte, Indiana

Rev. Doug Barnes, Appellant
Covenant Reformed Church, Pella, Iowa

⁷Potential demerits not acknowledged in the Overture include: a) reverting in part to a narrower select group conducting parts of the exam, similar in principle to the more hierarchical committee method used in the CRC which our URCNA Church Order sought to guard against; b) diminished testing of the candidate’s ability to think “on his feet”, an important skill in ministry; c) diminished testing of a candidate’s physical and mental stamina in undergoing the rigors of the *entirety* of an oral exam; and, d) diminished observation of the candidate’s confidence in oratorical/rhetorical skills in answering difficult questions, another important skill in ministry.

ATTACHMENTS TO APPEAL 1

From Page 4 of Classis EUS Minutes 2019 10 16

Article 20. Appeal from Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes
Motion that the appeal be ruled out of order.

Adopted

Ground:

- Church Order articles 29 and 31 do not allow an individual to directly initiate an appeal against the decision of a classis.

The clerk will inform the appellants.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPEAL

To Rev. Zachary Wyse, Clerk of Classis East of the United Reformed Churches:

And now, this 1st day of May, 2019 comes Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes and give notice of intention to appeal to Classis East from the decision of Classis East, made on April 5, 2019 regarding:

The adoption of an overture which specifies that portions of a candidacy examination be conducted as a written exam administered and graded outside the presence and hearing of the delegates to a meeting of Classis East.

Date: May 1, 2019

Mark Van Der Molen, Appellant
Immanuel URC, DeMotte, Indiana

Rev. Doug Barnes, Appellant
Covenant Reformed, Pella, Iowa

APPEAL

To Rev. Zachary Wyse, Clerk of Classis Eastern U.S. of the United Reformed Churches:

And now, this 3rd day of May, 2019, comes Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes and appeal the judgment or decision of Classis Eastern U.S. in the matter of the adoption of an overture which provides that portions of a candidacy examination be conducted in written form administered and graded outside a meeting of classis Eastern U.S. and outside the presence and

hearing of the delegates at a meeting of classis. The “*Overture Regarding Candidacy Examinations*”, *Article 18 and Appendix 4 from the Minutes of the April 5, 2019 meeting of Classis Eastern U.S.* are attached to this Appeal.

In support of said appeal, the appellants state that Classis Eastern U.S. committed the following error:

1. Specification of Error #1: The decision violates the letter and spirit of the Church Order requirement that a candidacy exam be conducted at a meeting of classis in the presence and hearing of delegates to such meeting.

Grounds:

- a) The Church Order repeatedly states that a candidacy examination be conducted “**at** a meeting of classis”. [Emphasis added] *.C.O. Article 4.*
- b) The “Guidelines for a Candidacy Exam” specifies that a consistory must request a “meeting of classis **for the exam**”. [Emphasis added]. *C.O. Appendix 3, par. 2(a).*
- c) The “Guidelines for a Candidacy Exam” specifies that upon passing the candidacy exam, waiver of an ordination exam can occur if the candidate were to receive a call within that classis: “Taking note of that possibility, the delegates **hearing the candidacy exam** should determine whether the performance is sufficient to warrant such a waiver.” [Emphasis added]. *C.O. Appendix 3, par. 2 (e).*
- d) Throughout the history of our federation, our churches in every classis have uniformly conducted candidacy examinations by way of oral examinations performed and heard in the presence of delegates at a meeting of classis.
- e) The decision disrupts the unity in our federation’s practice by introducing a method unique to Classis Eastern U.S., consisting of written examinations administered and graded outside the presence or hearing of delegates at a meeting of classis. This decision also sets a precedent for other classes to introduce disparate examination methods. Furthermore, the decision allows but does not require *any* oral examination of the candidate at a meeting of Classis Eastern U.S on the sections assigned for the written examination. “The churches of the federation, although distinct, voluntarily display their unity by means of a common confession and church order.” *Introduction to the Church Order.*
- f) The question of whether the decision has any merit to warrant changing the federation’s adopted procedure for candidacy exams is not the dispositive issue for consideration of this appeal. Rather, the decision has preemptively bypassed the good and orderly method for *all* the churches of *every* classis to consider the merits or

demerits of a new procedure, *i.e.*, presenting a carefully crafted overture to change or add specific provisions to the Church Order, adopted by a 2/3 vote at a meeting of Synod, and thereafter ratified by 2/3 of the consistories of the federation. *C.O. Article 66.*

Date: May 3, 2019

Mark Van Der Molen, Appellant
Immanuel URC, DeMotte, Indiana

Rev. Doug Barnes, Appellant
Covenant Reformed Church, Pella, Iowa

Potential demerits not acknowledged in the Overture include: a) reverting in part to a narrower select group conducting parts of the exam, similar in principle to the more hierarchical committee method used in the CRC which our URCNA Church Order sought to guard against; b) diminished testing of the candidate's ability to think "on his feet", an important skill in ministry; c) diminished testing of a candidate's physical and mental stamina in undergoing the rigors of the *entirety* of an oral exam; and, d) diminished observation of the candidate's confidence in oratorical/rhetorical skills in answering difficult questions, another important skill in ministry.

From Page 25 Classis EUS Agenda for 2019 04 05

Overture B

Overture Regarding Candidacy Examinations
*Presented as an Overture to Classis Eastern U.S.
From West Sayville Reformed Bible Church*

Background:

The process of a candidacy examination appears to have turned the floor of Classis into a place for committee work. The incredible amount of man-hours invested into a candidacy examination on the floor of Classis is too high. Practical changes could ease that burden on the delegates as well as on the examinees with no loss of content or rigor to the examination. These examinations remain a priority for the Classis, but classis could be conducting them in a more advantageous manner.

Overture:

The consistory of the West Sayville Reformed Bible Church overtures Classis Eastern US to take the following actions related to the process of the Candidacy Examination:

1. Require examiners in the areas of Bible Knowledge, Confessional Knowledge, Church History, and Church Polity to produce written examinations to be taken by the prospective candidate before the meeting of Classis. The written examination will be proctored by a member of the consistory of the prospective candidate's sponsoring congregation. Their completed written test will then be scored by the examiner and distributed to all delegates along with the other examination materials prior to the Classis meeting for review.
2. The written examinations should be crafted with an approximate minimum time frame of one hour and a maximum time frame of 2 hours in mind for completion at the discretion of the examiner.

Grounds:

1. The use of a written examination will help remove the time pressures of the floor of classis related to basic questioning.
2. The use of a written exam in areas of basic knowledge will be a better use of time for all parties.
3. Often, examinees become physically exhausted by the latter sections of an examination, and eliminating basic work on the floor through a written exam will make the whole exam quality increase.
4. The use of written materials in support of the floor exam does not preclude the opportunity for additional floor questions and clarifications in each section. In our view this enhances and completes the church order requirements related to an examination and does not relax them in any way. This test will not eliminate the floor portion of any exam area. However, it may bring the delegates to a decision sooner because they have arrived at the meeting already informed about the prospective candidate's basic qualifications in these exam areas.
5. The candidacy examination often has a rushed feel to it, which does not work in the favor of the candidate or the delegates of Classis. This could help ease that malady.

Done in West Sayville Reformed Bible Church
Consistory November 16, 2018

- From Page 4 Classis EUS Minutes 2019 04 05

Article 18: Overture B. Candidacy Examinations

Rev. Eenigenburg presented on behalf of WSRBC.

Overture Adopted
(Appendix 4)

From Page 10 of Classis EUS Minutes 2019 04 05

Appendix 4. Overture B as Adopted

The consistory of the West Sayville Reformed Bible Church overtures Classis Eastern US to take the following actions related to the process of the Candidacy Examination:

1. Require examiners in the areas of Bible Knowledge, Confessional Knowledge, Church History, and Church Polity to produce written examinations to be taken by the prospective candidate before the meeting of Classis. The written examination will be proctored by a member of the consistory of the prospective candidate's sponsoring congregation. Their completed written test will then be scored by the examiner and distributed to all delegates along with the other examination materials prior to the Classis meeting for review.
2. The written examinations should be crafted with an approximate minimum time frame of one hour and a maximum time frame of 2 hours in mind for completion at the discretion of the examiner.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO
APPEAL

To: Rev. Ralph Pontier, Stated Clerk

To: Clerk of Convening Consistory for Synod 2020 (Wellandport United Reformed Church)

And now, this November 15, 2019 comes Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes and give notice of intention to appeal to Synod 2020 from the decision of Classis East, made on April 5, 2019 regarding:

The adoption of an overture which specifies that portions of a candidacy examination be conducted as a written exam administered and graded outside the presence and hearing of the delegates to a meeting of Classis East.

Date: November 15, 2019

Mark Van Der Molen, Appellant
Immanuel URC, DeMotte, Indiana

Appeal 2

BY THE CONSISTORY OF COVENANT REFORMED CHURCH OF PELLA
FROM A DECISION OF CLASSIS EASTERN U.S.

To the Clerk of Wellandport URC, Convening Consistory for Synod 2020 (now 2021)
and Rev. Ralph Pontier, URCNA Stated Clerk

And now, this 23rd day of March 2020, comes the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church of Pella and appeals the judgment or decision of Classis Eastern U.S. to rule the individual appeal of Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes “out of order” on the stated ground that “*Church Order articles 29 and 31 do not allow an individual to directly initiate an appeal against the decision of a classis.*” [Minutes of the 16 October 2019 meeting of Classis Eastern U.S. are attached to this Appeal. See Art. 20.]

Provided with this appeal are the following attachments, in this (reverse-chronological) order:

1. Our Notice of Intent to Appeal for the present action, filed with the Stated Clerk on 17 March 2020.
2. The Minutes of Classis Eastern U.S. from 12-13 March 2020, rendering a decision on the original appeal.
3. Our initial Appeal, filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on 19 November 2019.
4. Our Notice of Appeal, filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on 19 November 2019.
5. The Minutes of Classis Eastern U.S. from 16 October 2019, which prompted our appeal.

A separate communication has been submitted alongside of this appeal document, including the reply of our Consistory to the Classis Eastern U.S. rejection of our appeal.

As a preliminary statement, the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church has been wronged by the decision of Classis Eastern U.S. in at least 2 ways. (This note was included with our original appeal.)

1. Classis Eastern U.S., in contradicting the adopted procedures found in Appendix 7 of the Church Order, damages our fellowship as churches by circumventing the process we have all agreed to follow.
2. This decision (if it stands) sets a dangerous precedent that could encourage assemblies to ignore the plain language of our Church Order Appendices, a practice which would further undermine our federative unity.

In support of said appeal, the appellant states that Classis Eastern U.S. committed the following error:

Specification of Error #1:

Classis Eastern U.S.’s disposition contradicts Appendix 7 to the Church Order, Guidelines for Appeals, which explicitly **permits** an individual appeal of a classis decision and **requires** such an appeal to be directly initiated with the assembly whose decision is being appealed.

Grounds:

- g) Classis Eastern U.S.’s citation of Church Order Article 29 is irrelevant, in that Article 29 applies to appeals by “assemblies.” The appeal before Classis Eastern U.S. was not an appeal initiated by an assembly, but was submitted by individuals.
- h) Classis Eastern U.S.’s decision misreads Church Order Article 31 to suggest that **every** individual appeal must first be filed with the individual’s consistory. However, Article 31 refers to an individual’s appeal from a “narrower assembly” – which, in context, refers to a **consistory** decision. This relevant language from the article clarifies that an appeal against a *decision of a consistory* must be appealed first *to the consistory itself*, rather than directing the appeal to the classis to which the consistory belongs. In other words, the appeal must go first to the assembly which made the offending decision.
- i) The articles of our Church Order provide succinct governing principles, while the Appendices to the Church Order provide expanded and detailed procedures which are fully in accord with those principles.
- j) Appendix 7, Guidelines for Appeals, which was adopted at Synod 2018, explicitly states that these guidelines are “*in accord with Church Order Articles 29 and 31*” and that “*these guidelines shall serve as the standard for admissibility of an appeal*” [Appendix 7, Introduction]. This shows that Synod adopted the Guidelines for Appeals with the explicit understanding that the more detailed provisions of those Guidelines were in accord with the general principles found in the Church Order.
- k) Appeal Guideline #1 explicitly guarantees an individual right to appeal a classis decision:

*“Appellant: An appeal may be made by a consistory or an individual who is a member of a church within the federation. The appeal may be submitted by the appellant himself or by a representative. **Any consistory or church member may appeal against a decision of any assembly of the federation**” [emphasis added].*

- l) Appeal Guideline #2 explicitly requires the initiation of the appeal to be filed with the assembly whose decision is being appealed:

*“Origination: **An appeal must first be made to the assembly whose decision is being appealed before appealing to broader assemblies.** The assembly whose decision is being appealed is the respondent to the appeal” [emphasis added].*

Guideline #2 makes no distinction between appeals initiated by assemblies and those initiated by individuals. This Guideline clarifies that *every appeal* must be initiated with the assembly which rendered the decision being appealed. In the present case, the decision being appealed was made by Classis Eastern U.S. Therefore, the Appellants were not merely permitted, but were *required*, to initiate their appeal with Classis Eastern U.S.

- m) Classis Eastern U.S.’s decision erroneously reads CO Article 31 as somehow being in conflict with the Guidelines for Appeals and/or assumes that Article 31 somehow acts as a retroactive limitation on the clear procedure found in Guideline #2. Instead, Article 31 and its general principle regarding an individual appeal from a consistory decision should be read in harmony with the specific Guidelines for Appeal that allow an individual to appeal a decision of any assembly (consistory, classis, synod), which demonstrates that such appeal must be filed with the assembly whose decision is being appealed (consistory, classis, synod).

Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church, Appellant
16 March 2020

ATTACHMENT #1

NOTICE OF INTENT TO APPEAL

To: Rev. Ralph Pontier, Stated Clerk of the URCNA

And now this 16th day of March, 2020, comes the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa, giving notice of intent to appeal to Synod Redeemer 2020, from the decision of Classis Eastern U.S. made on October 16, 2019, to rule the individual appeal of Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes “out of order” on the stated ground that *“Church Order articles 29 and 31 do not allow an individual to directly initiate an appeal against the decision of a classis.”*

On March 9, 2020, Classis Eastern U.S. rejected our appeal of their action. We now plan to appeal to Synod 2020.

Consistory – Covenant Reformed Church of Pella
16 March 2020

ATTACHMENT #2

Minutes for Classis Eastern U.S.
of the United Reformed Churches in North America
Fiftieth Session – March 12-13, 2020

Article 29. Appeal from Covenant URC (Pella)

Defeated

A. Ground A was ruled to be invalid.

- a. Church Order 29 *is* relevant, because article 29 describes the *only* appeal that may bypass a Consistory.
- B. Ground B was ruled to be invalid.
 - a. Church Order 31 describes the *only* avenue for appeal by individuals and reflects the wisdom of our church order in that individual appeals should first be vetted by a Consistory (cf. CO 25).
- C. Ground C was ruled to be invalid.
 - a. It begs the question as to whether the Church Order or the Appendix supercedes the other.
 - b. The introduction to Appendix 7 instructs us to read Appendix 7 “in accord with” Church Order 29 and 31.
- D. Ground D was ruled to be invalid.
 - a. The introduction to Appendix 7 is prescriptive, not descriptive.
- E. Ground E was ruled to be invalid.
 - a. If Synod intended to create a new right of appeal—*any individual* appealing *any assembly* directly—it would have amended Church Order 25, 29, and 31.
- F. Ground F was ruled to be invalid.
 - a. It begs the question as to whether an individual needs to go through his/her Consistory.
 - b. Church Order 29 stipulates that an appeal to an assembly must be made by an assembly.
- G. Ground G was ruled to be invalid.
 - a. It begs the question as to whether or not Appendix 7 *can* be read in harmony with Church Order 25, 29, and 31.
- H. In sum, we believe that Appendix 7 *cannot* be read in harmony with Church Order Articles 25, 29, and 31, and therefore are bound to follow the clear teaching of these three articles.

ATTACHMENT #3

APPEAL AGAINST CLASSIS EASTERN U.S.

To Rev. Zachary Wyse, Clerk of Classis Eastern U.S. of the United Reformed Churches:

And now, this 18 November 2019, comes the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church of Pella and appeals the judgment or decision of Classis Eastern U.S. to rule the individual appeal of Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes “out of order” on the stated ground that “*Church Order articles 29 and 31 do not allow an individual to directly initiate an appeal against the decision of a classis.*” [Minutes of the 16 October 2019 meeting of Classis Eastern U.S. are attached to this Appeal. See Art. 20.]

As a preliminary statement, the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church has been wronged by the decision of Classis Eastern U.S. in at least 2 ways.

1. Classis Eastern U.S., in contradicting the adopted procedures found in Appendix 7 of the Church Order, damages our fellowship as churches by circumventing the process we have all agreed to follow.
2. This decision (if it stands) sets a dangerous precedent that could encourage assemblies to ignore the plain language of our Church Order Appendices, a practice which would further undermine our federative unity.

In support of said appeal, the appellant states that Classis Eastern U.S. committed the following error:

Specification of Error #1:

Classis Eastern U.S.’s disposition contradicts Appendix 7 to the Church Order, Guidelines for Appeals, which explicitly **permits** an individual appeal of a classis decision and **requires** such an appeal to be directly initiated with the assembly whose decision is being appealed.

Grounds:

- n) Classis Eastern U.S.’s citation of Church Order Article 29 is irrelevant, in that Article 29 applies to appeals by “assemblies.” The appeal before Classis Eastern U.S. was not an appeal initiated by an assembly, but was submitted by individuals.
- o) Classis Eastern U.S.’s decision misreads Church Order Article 31 to suggest that **every** individual appeal must first be filed with the individual’s consistory. However, Article 31 refers to an individual’s appeal from a “narrower assembly” – which, in context, refers to a **consistory** decision. This relevant language from the article clarifies that an appeal against a *decision of a consistory* must be appealed first *to the consistory itself*, rather than directing the appeal to the classis to which the consistory belongs. In other words, the appeal must go first to the assembly which made the offending decision.
- p) The articles of our Church Order provide succinct governing principles, while the Appendices to the Church Order provide expanded and detailed procedures which are fully in accord with those principles.
- q) Appendix 7, Guidelines for Appeals, which was adopted at Synod 2018, explicitly states that these guidelines are “*in accord with Church Order Articles 29 and 31*” and that “*these guidelines shall serve as the standard for admissibility of an appeal*” [Appendix 7, Introduction]. This shows that Synod adopted the Guidelines for Appeals with the explicit understanding that the more detailed provisions of those Guidelines were in accord with the general principles found in the Church Order.
- r) Appeal Guideline #1 explicitly guarantees an individual right to appeal a classis decision:

*“Appellant: An appeal may be made by a consistory or an individual who is a member of a church within the federation. The appeal may be submitted by the appellant himself or by a representative. **Any consistory or church member may appeal against a decision of any assembly of the federation**” [emphasis added].*

- s) Appeal Guideline #2 explicitly requires the initiation of the appeal to be filed with the assembly whose decision is being appealed:

*“Origination: **An appeal must first be made to the assembly whose decision is being appealed before appealing to broader assemblies.** The assembly whose decision is being appealed is the respondent to the appeal” [emphasis added].*

Guideline #2 makes no distinction between appeals initiated by assemblies and those initiated by individuals. This Guideline clarifies that *every appeal* must be initiated with the assembly which rendered the decision being appealed. In the present case, the decision being appealed was made by Classis Eastern U.S. Therefore, the Appellants were not merely permitted, but were *required*, to initiate their appeal with Classis Eastern U.S.

- t) Classis Eastern U.S.’s decision erroneously reads CO Article 31 as somehow being in conflict with the Guidelines for Appeals and/or assumes that Article 31 somehow acts as a retroactive limitation on the clear procedure found in Guideline #2. Instead, Article 31 and its general principle regarding an individual appeal from a consistory decision should be read in harmony with the specific Guidelines for Appeal that allow an individual to appeal a decision of any assembly (consistory, classis, synod), which demonstrates that such appeal must be filed with the assembly whose decision is being appealed (consistory, classis, synod).

Date: 18 November 2019

Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church , Appellant

ATTACHMENT #4

NOTICE OF INTENT TO APPEAL

To: Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk, Classis Eastern U.S. of the URCNA

And now this 18th day of November, 2019, comes the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa, giving notice of intent to appeal to Classis Eastern U.S. from the decision of Classis made on October 16, 2019, to rule the individual appeal of Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes “out of order” on the stated ground that *“Church Order articles 29 and 31 do not allow an individual to directly initiate an appeal against the decision of a classis.”*

Consistory – Covenant Reformed Church of Pella
18 November 2019

ATTACHMENT #5

Minutes for Classis Eastern U.S.
of the United Reformed Churches in North America
Forty-ninth Session – October 16, 2019

Article 20. Appeal from Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes
Motion that the appeal be ruled out of order.

Adopted

Ground:

- Church Order articles 29 and 31 do not allow an individual to directly initiate an appeal against the decision of a classis.

The clerk will inform the appellants.

Communication 1 – Regarding Appeal 1

To: The Clerk of Wellandport United Reformed Church, Convening Consistory for Synod 2020
To: Rev. Ralph Pontier, Stated Clerk

Dear brothers:

Having previously sent you our Notice of Appeal, we are now hereby filing our Appeal of a decision of Classis Eastern U.S. As required by Church Order Appendix 7, Guideline 2, this appeal was initially filed with Classis Eastern U.S., the assembly whose decision is being appealed. As required by Church Order Appendix Guideline 5 (c), the present appeal to Synod is the same in substance as the appeal submitted to Classis Eastern U.S. No new materials or arguments have been added.

According to Church Order Appendix Guideline 5 (c), we are submitting with this Appeal the following:

1. *Notice of Appeal filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on May 1, 2019*
2. *Appeal filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on May 3, 2019, with attachments including the decision of Classis Eastern U.S. which is being appealed.*
3. *Notice of Appeal filed with the Stated Clerk and Clerk of Convening Consistory for Synod 2020*
4. *Appeal filed with the Stated Clerk and Clerk of Convening Consistory for Synod 2020, with attachment including the October 16, 2019 decision of Classis Eastern U.S. on the Appeal.*

As permitted by Church Order Appendix Guideline 5 (c) (iii): “*the appellant may respond to the arguments, decisions, and grounds used by the narrower assembly in its disposition of the appeal. Such response does not alter or add to the appeal under consideration, but shall be treated as a communication under Regulations for Synodical Procedure 3.5.*”

APPELLANTS’ REPLY TO CLASSIS EASTERN U.S.’S DECISION AND GROUNDS IN THEIR DISPOSITION OF THE APPEAL

Classis Eastern U.S.’s disposition in ruling the Appeal “out of order” directly contradicts the newly adopted Guidelines for Appeals, Appendix 7 to the Church Order.

Classis Eastern U.S. cited Church Order Articles 29 and 31 as not permitting “*an individual to directly initiate an appeal against a decision of classis*” [Classis Eastern U.S. minutes, Article 20].

However, Church Order Article 29 addresses appeals made by **assemblies**, not individuals. Thus Classis Eastern U.S.’s citation to Article 29 is irrelevant to the present appeal which was made by individuals.

Church Order Article 31 has generally applied to an individual’s appeal of a decision **made by a consistory**, in which the appeal must first be filed with the consistory which made that decision. Also, note that Article 31 requires that “[u]ntil a decision is made upon such appeal, the church member shall conform to the determination and judgment already passed.” This clearly applies to a decision made by a consistory, since an individual church member is directly bound to a decision of his consistory, unlike the present case in which there is nothing in Classis Eastern U.S.’s decision which would bind an individual church member.

Even more to the point, Synod 2018 adopted new procedures for the adjudication of appeals which are codified in Appendix 7 to the Church Order. The Introduction to the Guidelines states that these Guidelines are “*in accord with Church Order Articles 29 and 31*” and that these “... [g]uidelines ***shall serve as the standard for the admissibility of appeals***” [emphasis added].

Guideline #1 states:

*Appellant: An appeal may be made by a consistory or an individual who is a member of a church within the federation. The appeal may be submitted by the appellant himself or by a representative. **Any consistory or church member may appeal against a decision of any assembly of the federation***” [emphasis added].

This Guideline plainly states that any individual church member may appeal against a decision of any assembly of the federation. Of course, this would include an individual's appeal against a decision of a classis, which is the case with our present appeal.

The next question is *where* an individual appeal against a classis decision must be initiated. Guideline #2 provides the clear answer:

“Origination: An appeal must first be made to the assembly whose decision is being appealed before appealing to broader assemblies. The assembly whose decision is being appealed is the respondent to the appeal [emphasis added].”

Guideline #2 makes no distinction between appeals by assemblies or individuals. This Guideline applies to all appeals. All appeals must be initiated with the assembly which rendered the decision being appealed. In our present case, the decision being appealed was made by Classis Eastern U.S. Therefore, the Appellants were **required** to initiate their appeal with Classis Eastern U.S.

Classis Eastern U.S.'s decision to rule our appeal out of order on the ground that an individual cannot directly initiate an appeal of a classis decision requires reading Appendix 7 of the Church Order as somehow being in conflict with Church Order Article 31. However, they are not in conflict, but are “*in accord*” with each other as the Introduction to the Guidelines for Appeals itself states. Rather, it is Classis Eastern U.S.'s stated ground that is in direct conflict with the plain language of Appendix 7 regarding both the right of an individual to appeal the decision of any assembly, and the requirement that such appeal be initiated with the assembly that made the decision being appealed.

Respectfully submitted,

Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes.

Communication 2 – Regarding Appeal 2

To the Clerk of Wellandport URC, Convening Consistory for Synod 2020 (now 2021)
and Rev. Ralph Pontier, URCNA Stated Clerk

Dear Brothers,

On 17 March 2020, we sent you a Notice of Intent to Appeal a decision of Classis Eastern U.S. which was rendered on 16 October 2019, having appealed first to that classis. This appeal was considered and rejected at the 9 March 2020 meeting of Classis Eastern U.S.

As directed by Church Order Appendix 7, Guideline 5(c), this appeal to Synod is the same in substance as the initial appeal that we submitted to Classis Eastern U.S. No new materials or arguments have been added.

In accordance with that same Guideline, we are submitting with this Appeal the following:

1. Our Appeal-proper, with an attachment indicating the ruling of Classis Eastern U.S. concerning our appeal, which was rendered on 12-13 March 2020.
2. Our Notice of Intent to Appeal for the present action, filed with the Stated Clerk on 17 March 2020.
3. The Minutes of Classis Eastern U.S. from 12-13 March 2020, rendering a decision on the original appeal.
4. Our initial Appeal, filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on 19 November 2019.
5. Our Notice of Intent to Appeal, filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on 19 November 2019.
6. The Minutes of Classis Eastern U.S. from 16 October 2019, which prompted our appeal.

Church Order Appendix 7, Guideline 5(c)(iii) permits an appellant to respond to arguments, decisions, and grounds used by the narrower assembly in its disposition of the appeal. This response is to be regarded as a communication under Regulations for Synodical Procedure 3.5. Therefore, the remainder of this communication will comprise the (brief) response of the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church to the ruling of Classis Eastern U.S. which was rendered on March 12-13 of this year.

APPELLANTS' REPLY TO THE CLASSIS EASTERN U.S. REJECTION OF ITS APPEAL

The decision of Classis Eastern U.S. to reject our appeal hinges on the judgment that Synod Wheaton 2018 adopted an appendix which stood in conflict with Articles 25, 29, and 31 of our Church Order. This seems improbable at best, particularly given the careful deliberation, both by a study committee and by the synodical assembly itself, which preceded that adoption.

Appendix 7 can easily be understood and applied in a manner which stands in full agreement with the applicable articles of the URCNA Church Order. The appendix was adopted to help the churches in applying the Church Order to specific situations, and there is no sound reason to suppose that the two stand in conflict with each other. Therefore we see no justification for Classis Eastern U.S. to have discovered a conflict between them.

We urge the synodical delegates to recognize that Appendix 7, in all of its provisions, stands in full agreement with Art. 29 and Art. 31 of the Church Order.

As to the introduction of the question of Church Order Art. 25, which specifies that all matters addressed by a broader assembly "shall originate with a Consistory and be considered by classis before being considered by synod," the objection of Classis Eastern U.S. carries no weight. In an appeal, the essential matter has already been introduced to the assembly – presumably in a manner consistent with Art. 25. The appeal simply calls upon the assembly to revisit that previous decision in the light of a new objection. This is not the introduction of a new matter, but the request for reconsideration of a matter that has already been introduced. This article, therefore, is not germane to the issue.

In conclusion, it appears to us that Classis Eastern U.S. rejected our appeal on the basis of an essential disagreement with Appendix 7 of our Church Order, rather than on the merits of the

Church Order and appendices which were adopted according to good order. For this reason, we think it imperative that the Synod hear and adjudicate this appeal, thereby removing all doubt concerning the unity of purpose between our Church Order and its appendices.

Submitted with Respect and Love,
The Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church of Pella

Communication 3 – Regarding Classical Fraternal Relations

FROM: Classis Central US
RE: Ecumenical Relations and *Church Order* Art. 35
DATE: March 10, AD 2020

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

Church Order Art. 35 states:

Article 35 – Ecumenical Relations on a Classis Level

The churches of a classis may, as a group, enter into ecumenical relations with an individual church or group of churches such as a classis or presbytery. The classis shall keep synod informed of such ecumenical relations, thereby honoring our federative bond.

In keeping with CO Art. 35, Classis Central US wishes to inform synod, by means of this communication, that it has extended an invitation to Classis Minnkota of the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter into fraternal relations with Classis Central US. It did so by approving the following overture.

Overture to Enter Ecumenical Relations on a Classis Level with Classis Minnkota of the Christian Reformed Church

I. Background

At the 44th meeting of Classis Central US, Rev. Jon Bushnell was examined by way of Colloquium Doctum, as requested by Sioux Center URC. Rev. Bushnell was serving as the minister of Prinsburg CRC, which is a church in Classis Minnkota of the CRC. During the course of the Colloquium Doctum, Classis became aware that Classis Minnkota was in the practice of sending delegates to Synod under protest because of the presence of women delegates at the Synod of the CRC. Classis Minnkota is comprised of some 21 churches, five of which are outside the geographical boundaries of the Classis, but have been granted entrance into the Classis by the Synod. These five churches requested membership in the Classis for biblical and theological issues, the rejection of women serving in ecclesiastical office being primary among those issues. In recent years, Classis Minnkota has also sent overtures and communications to the Synod regarding the CRC Office of Social Justice.

In 2018, NAPARC received a communication from Classis Minnkota of the CRC requesting membership in NAPARC. NAPARC did not grant their request because the

constitution of NAPARC does not allow a Classis or Presbytery to join NAPARC. Membership is only granted at the level of the denomination or federation.

On October 14, 2019, Rev. Jon Bushnell and Rev. Todd De Rooy traveled to Pipestone, MN, to visit with some of the ministers of the Classis Minnkota InterNos (ministerial). At that meeting, Rev. Bushnell and Rev. De Rooy proposed the idea of Classis Central US inviting Classis Minnkota into ecumenical relations. One of the ministers said he was humbled and encouraged that we would even think of their Classis and their churches. The ministers of the InterNos expressed an openness to the idea.

Through this process, two things have become apparent: first, Classis Minnkota is a Classis that is theologically isolated from its denomination, and that sense of isolation is particularly palpable for their synodical delegates; and, second, there is biblical, confessional, and theological like-mindedness between the churches of Classis Minnkota and Classis Central US. Ecumenical relations at the level of Classis provides an opportunity to encourage isolated churches, reminding them that they are not alone in their service in God's Kingdom.

II. Overture

The Consistory of Redeemer United Reformed Church of Orange City, IA, overtures Classis Central U.S. to invite Classis Minnkota of the CRC to enter into ecumenical relations with Classis Central U.S., according to Article 35 of the URCNA Church Order.

III. Grounds

1. Article 35 of the URCNA Church Order states: "The churches of a classis may, as a group, enter into ecumenical relations with an individual church or group of churches such as a classis or presbytery. The classis shall keep synod informed of such ecumenical relations, thereby honoring our federative bond."
2. This is an opportunity for our Classis to encourage like-minded and theologically isolated churches in a region that borders our own Classis.
3. Ecumenical relations at the level of Classis do not have organic union as a goal, and therefore do not come under the categories of ecumenicity in the mandates of CERCU and CECCA.
4. Ecumenical relations at the level of Classis would allow for our Classis to send fraternal delegates to Classis Minnkota, and for us to receive fraternal delegates from Classis Minnkota, so that we might encourage one another.

Adopted by Classis Central US
March 9, AD 2020
Rev. Ralph A. Pontier
Stated Clerk, Classis Central US

Communication 4 – Ratification of Churches

To: Synod Redeemer 2020
From: Classis Pacific NW Clerk
Date: March 13, 2020
Re: Ratification of Churches Received Provisionally

Dear Brothers,

Classis Pacific Northwest has provisionally received into the United Reformed Churches two congregations pending ratification according to Article 32 of the Church Order.

They are Cornerstone Church in Medford, Oregon and Anchor of Hope Reformed Church in Silverdale, Washington.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,
Adrian Dieleman,
Clerk, Classis Pacific Northwest

Communication 5 – Hosting the Next Synod

From: James Lund james.lund@escondidourc.org
Subject: Escondido URC is willing to host Synod 2022
Date: February 21, 2020 at 11:49 AM
To: statedclerk@urcna.org



Rev. Pontier,

The EURC Consistory desires to host Synod 2022. How might we officially communicate this offer?

Thank you,
James Lund
Clerk of Consistory, Escondido URC

Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) Report to Synod Redeemer 2020

Esteemed brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

It is once again our privilege, as the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA), to report to you on the activities of your committee since our report to Synod Visalia, 2014. The following terminology document serves as the mandate of our committee:

- I. The first step, Ecumenical Contact, will follow a period of initial exploration. Ecumenical Contact will focus on studying matters of general concern between the RCNA and the “foreign” federation. This step will be implemented, where possible and desirable, by:
 1. Exchange of official observers at major assemblies such that one visit be made to one assembly/church per year to churches with whom we have ecumenical relations.
 2. Consultation on issues of joint concern, including:
 - a. authority and sufficiency of Scripture;
 - b. creeds and confessions;
 - c. formula of subscription to the confessions;
 - d. significant factors in the two federations’ history, theology, ecclesiology and stands on ethical issues;
 - e. church order and polity;
 - f. liturgy and liturgical forms;
 - g. preaching, sacraments and discipline;
 - h. theological education for ministers;
 - i. Exchange of Minutes (Acts) of the broadest assemblies.
 - j. Exchange of denominational Church Directories (Yearbooks);
 - k. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the Confessional Standards;
 - l. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the (Book or Manual of) Church Order;
 - m. Exchange of the most recently denominationally published editions of Psalters/Hymnals;
 - n. Exchange of information regarding current ecumenical relations.
- II. The second step, Ecumenical Fellowship, will focus on the oneness of the URCNA with the “foreign” federation, even though we are separated by geographical boundaries. This step will be implemented according to church order article 36, (in addition to the points listed under step one above) by:
 1. Occasional pulpit fellowship (by local option);
 2. Intercommunion, including ready reception of each other’s members at the Lord’s Supper– but not excluding suitable inquiries upon requested transfer of membership as regulated by each consistory (session);
 3. The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity;

4. Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another;
5. Joint action in areas of common responsibility;
6. Agreement that, as changes in polity, doctrine or practice are instituted, the churches will inform each other – understanding that the adoption of substantial changes may jeopardize the established ecumenical relationship.

Since our report to Synod Wheaton, CECCA has met six times by way of conference calls and once via a face-to-face meeting. This report will:

1. focus on churches with which we are in Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase II)
2. focus on churches with which we are in Ecumenical Contact (Phase I);
3. focus on churches with which we are corresponding with a view to entering into Ecumenical Contact (Phase I);
4. focus on our response to Synod Wheaton’s direction to investigate and advise as to means and methods for providing diaconal services to churches abroad with which the URCNA is in Ecumenical Contact or Ecumenical Fellowship;
5. conclude with a number of recommendations that require action by Synod.

I. Churches with whom we are in Ecumenical Fellowship

The Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ)

The RCNZ is a federation of churches established in 1953 by young Dutch immigrants of reformed persuasion who were unable to find a spiritual home within the more established (mainstream) churches in this country. From the beginning the denomination wanted to be a New Zealand rather than an immigrant church. English became the accepted and spoken language of the church within a few years of its establishment. As a confessional church the three forms of unity (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and Canons of Dordt) as well the Westminster Confession of Faith were accepted as its standards. Some initial tension was experienced in this area but, by asking office bearers to subscribe to the ‘whole system of doctrine’, a successful confessional basis has been achieved and maintained. There is therefore a merger of confessional traditions (Reformed and Presbyterian) evidenced in their congregations. The RCNZ remains a small denomination consisting of 3 presbyteries: Auckland – 6 congregations; Wellington – 8 congregations and one preaching place; South island – 7 congregations and one preaching place (total of 21 churches). They currently have 20 ministers and three vicars. They also have seven retired ministers five of whom still serve as they are able. They have 3,278 members, as of February 2019. Their congregations are clustered mainly around the major population centers: Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Hamilton, Hastings, Palmerston North, Nelson and Dunedin. For more details, see www.rcnz.org.nz.

The RCNZ’s next triennial synod is scheduled for later this year. CECCA plans to send a fraternal delegate.

The United Reformed Churches in Congo (URCC)

The URCC is a federation of churches comprised of 189 churches, organized in ten regional synods, which are subdivided into 43 classes. In addition there are 43 preaching stations with a view to church planting. The URC has 34 ordained pastors, 395 elders and 262 deacons. The total membership of the churches remains at approximately 14,000. The churches operate one Theological Seminary and nine Biblical Training Centers.

While CECCA planned to send a fraternal delegate to the URCC's General Synod held July 22-27, 2018 in Lubumbashi, this visit did not materialize due to extenuating circumstances and travel considerations.

The Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA)

The Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA) came into existence in 1859 and grew from the original five churches to 388 churches in 2019, with a total of 254 ministers of the Word. The churches are spread right across the RSA and also in Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia. These churches are currently being served by 254 ministers, in approximately 15 languages. The GKSA established its own theological school, founded in 1869 in Burgersdorp and operating since 1905 in Potchefstroom. The Theological School Potchefstroom (TSP) is staffed with 14 professors and three administrative officials, connected to the Faculty of Theology of the NWU, and has its own library.

The GKSA operates from an efficient building complex that includes a well-equipped auditorium and the denomination's archives. Ecumenical ties have been established with churches in the USA, Scotland, Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, the Congo, Japan and Korea. The GKSA operates in accordance with Holy Scripture, the three Formularies of Unity and the Canons of Dordt.

Since no synod was held during this reporting period, no visit was made.

The Calvinist Reformed Church in Indonesia (GGRC-NTT)

The GGRC-NTT is a federation of churches comprised of 15 congregations spread out in different islands of Indonesia, including Timor, Sabu, Rote and Java. The GGRC was established as a federation in 1950. The federation is organized in two classes. It has a total membership of 1,608 members. Most of the pastors studied at the Reformed Theological Seminary on Sumba (about 45 minutes flying from West Timor). One pastor received his training at the Theological Seminary of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario. Elders and deacons and other church leaders are trained by local leaders via seminars. The GGRC has known the URCNA since 2001 and would love to receive their help in the training of church leaders.

Brother Dick Moes visited the General Synod of the GGRC in August 2019. A copy of the address given at this synod can be found in **Appendix 1**. A report of the visit made can be found in **Appendix 2**.

The Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCC)

The FCC is a federation of churches made up of six presbyteries, representing forty-two congregations. The FCC was formed in 2000 but sees itself as a continuation of the Free Church of Scotland. Given this, they trace their history back to the Disruption of 1843 when, under the leadership of Thomas Chalmers, 450 ministers left the Church of Scotland. Through the Church of Scotland, the FCC dates back to 1560 and the Reformation under John Knox. While the URCNA has a different confessional background than the FCC, it is clear that we share the same, like precious faith. Our practices may differ at points (no instruments, exclusive metrical Psalm singing), but our similarities are clear.

Brother Jason Tuinstra was scheduled to address the General Assembly in May of 2019, but due to travel complications, he was unable to attend.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (EPCEW)

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW) is a federation that was established in 1996 with then 5 churches. The number of congregations within the EPCEW currently stand at twenty congregations, of which three are church plants in varying stages of growth, these are in Salford, Oxford and Sunderland. Two of their congregations are outside of the UK, one in Sweden (Tranas, to the West of Stockholm) and one in Germany, in Berlin). Statistics for the beginning of 2019 show a total of just over 820 baptised members and about 600 communicant members. A church plant was recently started in Oxford, which has some 40 people attending the morning services. In addition, there are a growing number of people meeting together in Sunderland in the north of England, and they started their first services on Easter Sunday this year. In November 2019, presbytery called two ministers (to Sheffield Presbyterian Church and All Saints Presbyterian Church in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (formerly Gateshead Presbyterian Church) with a view of planting a church in Lincoln and Zurich (Switzerland) respectively.

CECCA received an invitation to send a fraternal delegate to the EPCEW's biannual meeting where sister churches and other friends of the Presbytery come and share with them about the Lord's work in our denomination. Because this meeting only lasts one day and we had sent a fraternal delegate two years ago, we decided to send a letter. A copy of this letter can be found in **Appendix 3**.

II. Churches with whom we are in Ecumenical Contact

The Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT)

The ERCLAT consists of two congregations. The first congregation, the Riga Reformed Bible Church, was planted in 1990 by Pastor Alvis Sauka. Ten years later, a second congregation was planted in Riga. Recently, a third congregation was started in Pardaugavas.

Church leaders and members embraced Reformed theology through the teaching received at *Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary* in Riga. Professors such as Mark Vanderhart, Cornelis

Venema, Gerard Van Groningen, Hans Buyer, Simon Kistemaker, Larry Sibley and more have been instrumental in mentoring the congregations.

Brother Glomsrud made a visit to the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia in February 2020. A copy of the address can be found in **Appendix 4**. A report of the visit made can be found in **Appendix 5**.

CECCA proposes that the URCNA enter in Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with the ERCLAT.

The Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI-NTT)¹

The GGRI-NTT in the province of East Nusa Tenggara is a federation consisting of 19 established churches that are located on Sumba, Savu and Timor. It is organized in 4 classes and has a membership of 8000 people. The federation maintains a Theological College in Waingapu, the capital of East Sumba. There are 35 students on Campus at the moment. Three of them are married. There are four students doing practicum in the churches at the moment; all of them are in Papua. There are five full-time lecturers and nine part-time lecturers. Since the College does not have its own campus yet, they are presently renting a building.

Brother Dick Moes made a visit to the General Synod of the GGRI-NTT in August 2019. A copy of the address given at this synod can be found in **Appendix 6**. A report of the visit made can be found in **Appendix 7**.

Since we have been an Ecclesiastical Contact relationship for four years and there are no outstanding issues **CECCA proposes** that the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with the GGRI-NTT with a view to the GGRI-NTT overturing their national synod in the fall of 2020 to extend this relationship to the GGRI-nasional.

The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)

The PCEA is a federation of 12 congregations organized in three presbyteries. The congregations are spread from Brisbane in the north down to Geelong in Victoria. There is one congregation in Ulverstone, Tasmania. The PCEA does not have a seminary, but uses the colleges of the Presbyterian Church in Australia, which is complemented by reading, and essays set by their own Training of Ministry Committee to cover their own distinctive doctrines, history and practice. The PCEA has a membership of about 700 members. It holds to the Westminster Standards and the Westminster Form of Presbyterian Church Government.

CECCA received an invitation to send a fraternal delegate to the PCEA's annual General Assembly. Because these general assemblies are annual and we had made a visit previously, we decided to send a letter. A copy of this letter can be found in **Appendix 8**.

CECCA proposes that the URCNA enters into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with the PCEA.

¹ There are three Indonesian churches that have GGR in their acronym: the GGRC, the GGRI-NTT, and the GGRI-nasional. GGR stands for *Gereja-Gereja Reformasi* meaning: *Reformed Churches*.

Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC)

The Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC) was founded in 1962. At the moment, it has 87 churches and 12 church plants spread out over seven presbyteries. 60 pastors, 58 elders, and six deacons serve the churches. The federation has a total of 9600 communicant members. The federation has a theological seminary and two Bible Colleges. The federation holds to the Westminster Standards and has a presbyterian form of church government. The AEPC is a member of the ICRC.

CECCA proposes that the URCNA remain in Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the AEPC at this time.

III. Churches with whom we are corresponding with a view to Ecumenical Contact

Free Church of Scotland (FCS)

The Free Church of Scotland traces its roots to the Disruption of 1843 and the struggle of the Scottish church to remain ‘free’ from State interference. Under the leadership of the Free Church’s first moderator, Thomas Chalmers, 450 ministers left the Church of Scotland. The denomination currently has over 100 congregations in Scotland, as well as two in London, plus sister churches founded by mission work in India, Peru and South Africa. The Church has a full time seminary in the middle of Edinburgh for the training of its ministers and other Christian workers. The Free Church is a member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) and has fellowship with many other Reformed churches throughout the world. The FCS stands firmly in the tradition which accepts the Bible as its supreme standard and the Westminster Confession as its subordinate standard. While the Free Church continues to prize its heritage and traditions, it also feels compelled to work creatively to bring the good news about Jesus to bear on each generation, convinced that the timeless message of the gospel speaks to all of life with up-to-the-minute relevance and power.

Brother Jason Tuinstra addressed the 176th General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland in May of 2019. A copy of the address given at this GA can be found in **Appendix 9**. A report of the visit made can be found in **Appendix 10**.

CECCA proposes that the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the FCS.

Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA)

Post-World War II migrants established this denomination in 1951. Currently, the CRCA has an active membership of around 7800 in over fifty churches spread throughout Australia. From exclusively Dutch beginnings, the CRCA is now a culturally diverse group, reflecting the character of Australian society, and is seeking to proclaim the Christian message in a contemporary and relevant way. It is actively engaged in Christian missions both within Australia and abroad. The CRCA subscribes to the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession. The basic unit of the CRCA is the local church, which is governed by the local session as elected by the congregation. All sessions within a geographical area (typically on

a statewide basis) meet every 3-4 months as a classis. Nationally, delegates meet every three years as Synod. The synod deals only with issues raised by a classis. The CRCA is a member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

CECCA proposes that the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the CRCA.

Sudanese Reformed Churches

The Sudanese Reformed Churches (SRC) started as a small household fellowship in outskirts of Khartoum in 1992. This fellowship gave birth to three other household fellowships in Khartoum. By February 2005, these four fellowships were organized as a Christian denomination under the name ‘Sudanese Reformed Churches’. On October 31, 2005, the need for a governing body was discussed and a committee was formed. The governing body was formed with the purposes that it would provide leadership, would govern these churches and ensure that matters of doctrine and life, and growth (in faith as well as numbers) were and are grounded in the Reformed faith as taught by the Reformers (Luther and Calvin) and the Reformed confessions. A church order was adopted in the same year. Three synods were held between 2009 and 2013. Because of recent security and logistical difficulties in South Sudan, no synod has been held since. The SRC now has sixteen churches plus 18 groups in different internally displaced person (IDP) and refugee camps divided over three classes with a total membership of more than 6000. It adheres to the three Ecumenical Creeds and the three Forms of Unity. For more information on the SRC see **Appendix 11**.

CECCA proposes that the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the SRC.

Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA)

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) are a federation of 16 congregations, 14 of which are in Western Australia, two in Tasmania and a home-congregation in Cairns. They are a membership of about 5,000 members. Their historical roots are in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands Liberated (GKv) as a result of post-World-War II immigration. The churches subscribe to the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity. The FRCA terminated their sister church relationship with the GKv in 2018 because of increasing liberal trends and decisions in the GKv.

Brother Swets made a visit to the General Synod of the FRCA in Bunbury in 2018.

A copy of the address given at this synod can be found in **Appendix 12**. A report of the visit made can be found in **Appendix 13**.

CECCA proposes that the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the FRCA.

Evangelical Reformed Church in India (ERC)²

The Evangelical Reformed Church in India is a federation of churches comprised of 58 congregations spread out in different States of India, including a few fellowships in Nepal. The

² The acronym ERC should not be confused with the acronym ERQ (the Reformed Church in Quebec)

ERC was established as a federation on November 12, 2010. The federation is organized in five classes. It has a total membership of 1821 members. Most of the pastors studied at the Reformed Theological Institute in North India. One of them has been trained in Mid-America Reformed Seminary Dyer, IN USA. Elders and deacons and other church leaders are trained by the Mission of Peace-Making (MPM) *Teaching Learning Events* (TLEs). The ERC has been the result of many prayers and financial support of the URCNAs since 2004 under the leadership of Mission of Peace Making. The confessional basis of the ERC is in the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards. Presently the ERC has 48 ministers.

In response to our form letter to explore whether we are able to be in an Ecclesiastical Contact relation, we received the required information from the ERC. Their response can be found in **Appendix 14**

CECCA proposes that the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the ERC

IV. Response to Synod Wheaton’s direction to investigate and advise as to means and methods for providing diaconal services to Churches abroad with which the URCNA is in Ecumenical Contact and Ecumenical Fellowship

Factual Background:

Leading up to Synod Wheaton 2018, CECCA issued a full report on its recent activities and made several recommendations including that Synod address the question of how CECCA going forward might most effectively address diaconal-type requests for assistance from needy churches abroad with whom the URCNA is in either Ecclesiastical Fellowship and Ecclesiastical Contact.

Synod Wheaton 2018 took this matter up and formally responded to CECCA’s recommendation. Synod Wheaton 2018 has directed CECCA as follows:

Synod’s Directive:

“That Synod direct CECCA to study how the URCNA might support needy churches abroad with which we have ecumenical contact (Phase 1) or fellowship (Phase 2) and to report back at our next synod. In its research, CECCA should consult with the URCNA Missions Committee, sister churches, and relevant organizations. That this be Synod’s response to CECCA Recommendation #7.

Grounds:

a. In Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 55, we confess in answer to the question about the meaning of the communion of saints: “First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts.
Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and joyfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.

- b. CECCA receives a variety of requests, such as financial support for fraternal delegates to travel to our synod meetings, construction projects, and facilitating theological training.
- c. CECCA has no policy to direct its members in how to deal with these requests.
- d. In practice, members of CECCA have sought private financial support for fraternal delegates to travel to our synod meetings.
- e. Consulting with the Missions Committee will prevent overlap.
- f. The URCNA has much to learn from sister denominations and relevant organizations.”

Activities Undertaken by CECCA in Response to Synod’s Directive:

In accordance with the directive of Synod Wheaton, CECCA undertook a detailed investigation of the practices and policies of as many of our sister federations/denominations in NAPARC as possible in order to gain needed information from them that would assist in our development of best practices in respect of providing diaconal services. CECCA further consulted directly with URCNA Missions Coordinator Rev. Richard Bout. Finally CECCA made detailed inquiry of two relevant organizations currently actively involved in providing diaconal assistance to churches abroad on a daily basis. These organizations are Reformed Mission Services (“RMS”), Rob Brinks, Administrative Director and Word and Deed, Rick Postma, Executive Director of Public Relations.

In terms of contact with sister churches CECCA reached out to several sister churches in writing and requested description of their practices. Some of them responded and some did not. Nonetheless, the process of investigation was greatly simplified by virtue of the fact that NAPARC conducted a World Missions Consultation, September 17-18, 2019 at the Orthodox Presbyterian Church Administrative Offices in Willow Glen, Pennsylvania. Nine of the 11 member churches of NAPARC, including the URCNA attended and gave detailed reports of their missionary and diaconal activities abroad.

CECCA sent a representative World Missions Consultation. He has reported in detail the information obtained from our sister churches and that report is attached hereto as Appendix A.

CECCA summarizes as to its investigations as follows:

1. The three larger of our sister churches have formed and are operating missional/diaconal organizations with corresponding processes and procedures in place. In none of those cases, however, is the distinction between missional and diaconal services precisely defined or delimited. In the smaller denominations there generally is no separately defined diaconal activity.
2. Our own Missions Committee was not yet ready to make any specific recommendations or offer advice as to how CECCA might best proceed in response to Synod’s directive.
3. Both Word and Deed and RMS are organizations that are regularly undertaking diaconal response work and both can be trusted to carry it out faithfully and effectively.

As Rev. Bout was present at the Consultation, the CECCA representative took advantage of that opportunity to engage him and, through him, the URCNA Missions Committee, on the subject matter of Synod’s directive to CECCA. A discussion was had of the current status of our Missions Committee’s thinking in respect of providing diaconal assistance abroad and Rev. Bout

was at that time was unable to offer anything specific due to on going development by the Missions Committee of its URCNA Missions Plan 2020. That plan has now been published to the churches and their response and input have been solicited. As currently presented the plan makes no comment on nor contains proposals related to the provision of diaconal services either at home or abroad.

Rob Brinks of Reformed Mission Services made a formal PowerPoint presentation on behalf of that organization. He described in detail the several ways in which RMS is equipped to and has been providing diaconal assistance in recent years. It was evident that RMS is actively engaged in the types of diaconal assistance in foreign countries that are of the kind contemplated by Synod Wheaton's directive. It has significant experience in delivering them efficiently as well as in monitoring their effectiveness going forward once delivered.

With respect to Word and Deed, CECCA has direct experience working with it in an effort to respond to diaconal needs of the United Reformed Church in the Congo (URCC). CECCA has been asked to assist the URCC to assist in the construction a Christian school building in the city of Mbujimaya Batiment at a currently estimated cost of approximately USD \$175,000.

CECCA approached Word and Deed in the matter and learned much of its preferred processes and procedures. CECCA's familiarity with Word and Deed has occurred against the backdrop of the URCC's above-described request. CECCA contacted Rick Postma, Word and Deed's Director of Public Affairs. Brother Postma indicated that in Word and Deed's experience it might be unadvisable to start diaconal assistance to the URCC with such a large project. The joint thinking became that it would be preferable first to explore whether CECCA and Word and Deed in partnership could assist the URCC in the matter of theological education and the training of qualified pastors.

In furtherance of this goal, Brother Postma organized a conference call among Rev. Kabongo of the URCC, himself, CECCA Chairman Rev. Jason Tuinstra and CECCA member Douglas Field. This was a detailed conversation at which Rev. Kabongo provided much needed information. There were additional questions posed as to which he did not have answers at his fingertips and we continue to await his further response. Brother Postma recently followed up, but CECCA has heard nothing additional. This is because, it is believed, Rev. Kabongo has not made any additional response or had further contact.

Deliberations of CECCA in Respect of Investigatory Information Obtained:

During and after the assembly of the foregoing background information, CECCA has met three times to discuss its findings and to develop its specific response and recommendations to Synod Redeemer in answer to Synod Wheaton's directive. CECCA met face to face on May 7, 2019 at Bethel United Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan, and by lengthy telephone conferences October 16, 2019 and December 18, 2019.

In preparation for its meetings CECCA identified several essential conditions. As its contact with sister federations/denominations and with RMS and Word and Deed demonstrated, at present there exists among them no common, shared or comprehensive approach for dealing with

providing diaconal services for needy churches abroad. CECCA had hoped to avoid “reinventing the wheel” but it developed upon investigation that CECCA would likely need to “start from scratch.” This proved to be a large and daunting task, but CECCA had the advantage of proceeding at significant liberty, unburdened by previous attempts and precedents relating to the subject.

For purposes of full discussion, CECCA proceeded on the basis that there are 3 general approaches that could be taken in developing institutional structure and operational processes and procedures to provide effective, meaningful and lasting diaconal response to requests for assistance and support from churches broad. CECCA anticipated and tried to think through as many problems and permutations as possible.

The 3 general approaches identified were:

1. CECCA sets up and then itself operates a comprehensive program for responding to requests from abroad including vetting and execution.
2. CECCA locates trusted organizations that have the capacity of both vetting requests and responding to them and refers out requests to those organizations for further disposition thus surrendering further involvement. Regarding requests for travel assistance to and from URCNA synods, CECCA is competent to evaluate such requests so that our federation can share its gifts and financial considerations do not prohibit certain needy churches from strengthening our fraternal relations.
3. CECCA develops a hybrid process whereby it vets requests and responds to them up to a specified level of financial commitment and/or complexity of execution. Otherwise, it refers out to other qualified organization(s) for further processing those found to be in excess of its capacity to handle.

CECCA recognized that as to alternatives 1 and 3 there would be a steep learning curve in undertaking itself all aspects of meeting requests from abroad. CECCA recognized that a significant challenge would be to ensure that any effort at providing diaconal services were operated and carried out in strict accordance with URCNA principles and values.

Accordingly, for the Committee’s benefit and to aid in discussion the reaching of valid and workable conclusions, there were prepared: (1) a “bare-bones” outline of what CECCA’s task could be envisioned to be, (2) a “fleshed in” set of proposed policies, practices and protocols that contains ideas as to how CECCA might specifically, consistently and effectively respond to requests for assistance if it did so on its own and (3) a draft of a possible formal response to be submitted to Synod in response to its request. Those documents are attached to this report as **Appendices B, C and D** respectively.

Response of CECCA to Synod Wheaton’s directive:

After engaging in the research, investigation, envisionment and exhaustive deliberation and consideration of the three alternative approaches suggested above, CECCA determined that Alternative 2 is, in all the circumstances, the alternative most suitable to our current needs.

In making its recommendation that follows CECCA has taken into account the scale and frequency of requests that can at the present time be anticipated, our URCNA Church Order, our federational preference for the diverse, diffuse and non-hierarchical “consistorial” form of church governance and the organizational effort, resources and specialized knowledge (already amassed and being carried out by the trusted auxiliary organizations mentioned above) which would be essential to operating an efficient, effective and incorruptible diaconal services program on our own.

Accordingly, CECCA recommends to Synod Redeemer 2020 as follows:

- that synod authorize CECCA the amount of \$15,000 (to be reviewed at each synod), which CECCA is authorized to use at its discretion for the sole purpose of assisting foreign pastors and elders with travel and related expenses for the purpose of attending our synods;
- that all other diaconal assistance requests by needy churches abroad with which we have ecumenical relations be referred to Reformed Mission Services (RMS) or such other similarly capable organization as CECCA in its discretion may select for response. Grounds for choosing RMS for responding to diaconal requests are: (i) RMS is closely related to the URCNA; (ii) RMS operates under the authority of a local consistory, viz. the Trinity URC, Caledonia, MI.
- that CECCA remain at all times available to local URCNA congregations to provide information and advice relative to diaconal requests they may be considering on their own.

Closing Comments:

CECCA is grateful to and thanks Synod Wheaton for its directive to look into, study and make recommendations as to the foregoing matters. CECCA understands that there may be questions and the need for information. It is ready to receive and will promptly respond to all inquiries.

V. Recommendations

CECCA recommends to Synod Redeemer that:

1. Synod grant the privilege of the floor to the following member of CECCA to answer Synod’s questions regarding this report: Rev Dick Moes (now emeritus pastor and not a delegate to Synod);
2. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT);
3. the URCNA enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase II) with the Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI-NTT) with a view to the GGRI-NTT overturing their national synod in the fall of 2020 to extend this relationship to the GGRI-nasional.

4. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA);
5. the URCNA remain in Ecumenical Contact (Phase I) with the Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC);
6. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS);
7. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the Christian Reformed Churches in Australia (CRCA);
8. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the Sudanese Reformed Churches (SRC);
9. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA);
10. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the Evangelical Reformed Church in India (ERC);
11. Synod accept the recommendations of CECCA in response to Synod Wheaton's directive to investigate and advise as to means and methods for providing diaconal services to Churches Abroad with which the URCNA is in Ecumenical Contact or Fellowship;
12. Synod reappoint Rev. Dick Moes as member-at-large of CECCA (year 7 and 8 of 9 year term).

Humbly submitted,

Rev. Ray Sikkema, member
 Rev. Rick Miller, member
 Rev. Michel Persaud, member
 Br. Gerald Swets, member
 Br. Ryan Glomsrud, member
 Br. Douglas Field, member
 Rev. Jason Tuinstra, chairman
 Rev. Dick Moes, secretary.

Appendix 1

Address to the Synod of the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia held in Korlok on the island of Rote on August 13-15, 2019

Mr. Chairman, dear brothers,

I bring you greetings from the GGRI-NTT. I attended their synod last week and the brothers asked me to convey their greetings to you. I was deeply impressed by their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Truly, for them “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”. I was also deeply impressed by their fellowship in the Spirit. I don’t think they ever voted once, but took all decisions by consensus. Moreover, their love for God the Father, for each other and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ deeply warmed my heart. I was profoundly impressed by the professional manner in which they conducted their meetings. It was somewhat of a surreal experience to listen to 38 men debate the finer points of Reformed church polity in one of the most remote places on the island of Sumba. Because they knew their stuff so well, I told them they had nothing to be ashamed of. I wished them the Lord’s blessing as they continued to labour in faith, hope, and love for the edification of their local churches and their church federation.

It’s good to be in your midst again. I have fond memories of my previous visit to you last year. During that time, I had the privilege of leading worship services in Malang on the island of Java and Kupang on the island of Timor. I was deeply touch by being able to accompany the elders after the worship service and visit the sick, praying with them and offering them words of encouragement. This past Sunday, I had that same privilege when we visited the widow of one of the founding members of your church federation. I read Psalm 23 with her and pronounced the Aaronic benediction upon her. I am also very impressed by your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, your fellowship in the Spirit, and your love of God the Father, each other, and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I see that you are conducting your meetings in the same professional manner as the GGRI-NTT. Also you, have nothing to be ashamed of when it comes to your understanding of Reformed church polity. You too, just like your brothers in the GGRI-NTT, by the grace of God can humbly hold your heads up high!

In Lord’s Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism, we confess that we believe that as members of Christ we not only have communion with Christ and share in all his benefits and gifts, but that we use the gifts God has given us for the wellbeing of the other members of the church. This is how the United Reformed Churches in North America understand our Ecclesiastical Contact and Ecclesiastical Fellowship relationship with other Reformed churches throughout the world. Because we are united to Christ through faith vertically, we are also united to each other through faith horizontally. And we desire to come along side other Reformed churches and encourage them and have them encourage us as we continue the journey of faith together to the new heaven and new earth.

As we are on our journey of faith to the new heaven and new earth, we have the awesome privilege of participating in God’s mission for his glory or his drama of redemption in which he is restoring creation and humanity to the Sabbath rest of living in his loving presence and participating in his life in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The Father is the author of this drama; the Son is the main actor; and the Holy Spirit is the director and producer of the drama. The Bible is the script of the drama. And the church, as the theater of God’s drama of redemption, performs the script of the drama on the stage of this world.

However, there is also an opponent to the church being the theater of God's drama of redemption and participating in God's mission for his glory on the stage of this world. That opponent is Satan. He uses our own sinful flesh and the stories of our idolatrous culture to capture our imagination and to tempt us to perform the script of those stories instead of or in addition to the script of Scripture. We as United Reformed Churches in North America feel the tension between those two stories every day. I am sure that you here in Indonesia feel the same tension. That is why it is so urgent to daily pray the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer: lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Because we participate in the same redemptive mission for God's glory and share the same struggles of faith as you do, we are here to offer you our encouragement for your faithful performance of God's drama of redemption as church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The URCNA is a young federation that is just over 20 years old. Our membership is around 25,000 spread out over about 125 congregations, including a number of church plants that have not yet been organized as independent congregations. We are engaged in mission activity in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines and Romania. Together with the OPC we have produced the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* with the Ecumenical Creeds, the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards in the back. Because of the profound ecumenical and historical significance of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, our Synod and the OPC General Assembly had combined meetings last year in Wheaton, Illinois.

Brothers, I have to leave a little earlier than I would like to. I wish you a good remainder of your Synod. May the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ continue to lead and guide you in your discussions and decision-making. May he also lead and guide you as churches as he makes you receptive to the voice of your heavenly Father, open to his provision, and available to his leading.

On behalf of the URCNA, I bring you our warmest greetings in Christ.

Dick Moes

Fraternal Delegate

Appendix 2

Report of the Visit to the Synod of the GGRC on August 13-15, 2019

After driving for some two and a half hours with a taxi driver over paved and unpaved roads full of potholes (much like Sumba) from Ba'a, the capital of the island of Rote, to Korlok, a remote village on this island, a busload of delegates and fraternal delegates arrived in Korlok, where the convening church of the synod of the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia was located and where synod was held. The brothers who were already there warmly welcomed us. Rev. Andrew Pol, former missionary to Sumba and fluent in the Indonesian language, was present on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches together with brother Otto Bouwman. Two brothers from the Free Reformed Churches were also present as fraternal delegates. The GGRI-KB (= Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia) had also sent two fraternal delegates as deputies of the GGRI-nasional. And Rev. Anup Hiwale from the Evangelical Reformed Church in India was present as an observer. As was the case with the GGRI-NTT, so also with the GGRC I was deeply impressed by the

Indonesian brothers' faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, their fellowship in the Spirit, and their love of God the Father, each other, and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, they conducted their meetings in the same professional manner as the GGRI-NTT.

Prior to synod on August 11, a prayer service was held. The next day, when synod was opened, a government official spoke on behalf of the government. Rev. Andrew Pol delivered a meditation on Psalm 133.

I offer the following summary of some of the discussion points and decisions taken.³

Relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv)

An emotional discussion took place about what to do about the sister church relationship the GGRC has with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv). While some were of the opinion that this relationship should be discontinued, others felt that a letter of admonition should first be sent since this had never been done. By consensus, synod agreed to do the latter. If the GKv refuses change its ways and return to the clear teaching of Scripture, it can be expected that the GGRC will sever ties with the GKv at its next synod.

Relationship with the GGRI-Timor

The most difficult topic that synod addressed was the relationship between the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor (Smithville) churches.⁴ Synod spent more time on this topic than on any other. After a lengthy discussion on the floor of synod about the relationship between the two federations, Synod Korlok finally decided: (1) to ask the Canadian Reformed delegates to communicate the deep unhappiness of the GGRC federation to the Smithville Mission Board. The GGRC do not accept the argument of Smithville that the establishment of the GGRI-Timor was a local matter and that Smithville needs to accept as binding whatever the local GGRI-Timor churches decided. In their minds, Smithville must accept responsibility for the developments in their mission field. Since Article 18 of the Church Order of the Canadian Reformed Churches makes it clear that missionaries are accountable to the sending church, the sending church also is to accept responsibility for the actions of the missionary. (2) To to ask Rev. Andrew Pol to try to

³ This summary could not have been made without the excellent notes taken by Rev. Dr. Andrew Pol, the consecutive oral translation he gave during synod and the report he and brother Bouwman wrote for their committee.

⁴ In 2003, the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church opened a mission field in Timor, settling its missionary, Rev. Edward Dethan (Rev. Yonson Dethan's brother) in Kupang. Subsequently a Theological Seminary and a Teachers' College (STAKRI) was established here. Kupang is where the GGRC currently have several churches and STAKRI is within a few miles of where the GGRC operate a K-12 school (Children of Light). The intention of the Smithville CanRC has been that any churches formed out of its mission work would join the GGRC. The GGRC were informed of this in letters dating to 2003 and 2004, and reassured of this in 2012. However, much to the frustration of the GGRC, this has not happened. Rather, in the fall of 2016, the nine churches born out of Smithville's mission work federated as the GGRI-Timor. In a letter dated April 9, 2018, the Smithville Canadian Reformed council informed the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches of this. The letter noted: "Despite Smithville's encouragement and hope that the mission churches would have joined themselves to the GGRC, this did not occur." Within the GGRI-Timor the impression exists that the GGRC has a tendency to hierarchy and strong men; thus it is not appealing for those who are now in the GGRI-Timor, among whom there are some former members of a liberal church with hierarchy and strong men, to join the GGRC. On August 4, 2018, the CRCA was informed by the Timor Mission Board that the GGRI-Timor is seeking to join the GGRI-nasional.

set up a mediation meeting between the respective inter-church delegations from both church federations before his departure from the Kupang area. As a result, Rev. Pol sent out an invitation that night; a day or so later GGRI-Timor delegates replied that, though they were willing to meet with some of the synodically appointed GGRC delegates, they refused to meet with all of them.

Church Literature

Given the limited financial resources of the GGRC, many members of congregation, including elders and young people, do not have church literature. The leadership would like to improve the congregation's biblical knowledge as well singing and praising the Lord in private and public worship. Sunday school materials are needed to instruct church members as well leaders in our churches. In this light, synod decided to mandate the Deputies for External Relations and for Internal Affairs to arrange for funding in regard to Bibles, a Book of Praise containing the Psalms (Genevan melodies), *Kidung Jemaat* (Hymnbook), and the Sunday School material written by Mrs. Pol.⁵

Construction of church buildings

Local GGRC churches are growing in members. Most of the buildings they have were very simple and small. Thus, local churches asked the Committee to see if it can find some supports or donators to help the local churches that need to either build a new church building or help renovating the old church building. Some of the churches already have some funds to begin building. However, they do not have enough funds to continue. In addition, new mission churches need a place to worship. Thus, given the limited financial resources of the GGRC, synod decided to mandate the Financial Commission to try to get funding from outside the GGRC through sister churches, the government, or other institutions that will not apply conditions with a view to the construction of church buildings. Synod was advised to approach organisations, such as Word and Deed, rather than church federations for this purpose.

Financial Support for ministers, retired ministers, and families of ministers who have passed away

Synod decided in accordance with article 13 of the Church Order that the church where the pastor serves is obliged to take care for the pastor and his family. The same applies to looking after the families of ministers who have passed away. What prompted this decision was the fact that some years ago, a pastor passed away and there is now the impending death of another pastor. The question came up as to whether support should be provided by the churches together or by the local church. Synod decided that the latter should be the case.

⁵ The Church Book was originally published by the GGRI-NTT and contains the Creeds and Confessions, the Reformed liturgical forms, etc., and the Church Order. Dr. Pol therefore advised them to interact with the GGRI, as well as with LITINDO, a translation organization originally set up through the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. A previous Synod of the GGRI decided that the Indonesian translation of the Church Book can use some improvement and appointed a committee to look into this. The Dutch churches have handed translation and publication work over to the Free Reformed Church of Mundijong to take care of this in the future. The Sunday School materials written by Mrs. Pol were originally published through Yayasan Komunikasi Bina Kasih, a publisher in Jakarta. After the existing supply was sold, LITINDO arranged for republication.

Raising the human resources and economy of the congregations

Because the GGRC realizes that it needs to increase the income of the church members and churches in order to be able to meet the needs of their pastors and pastors' families, as well as other projects (e.g. literature for the churches), synod decided to give a mandate to the Financial Commission to take steps for cooperation with the sister churches, churches with which we have contact, and the government with a view to raising the human resources and economy of the congregations, through English courses and sewing instruction for mothers and women in the area of the GGRC. Moreover, Synod mandated the Financial Commission to try to get financial assistance for other efforts in the realm of agriculture, livestock, and other areas. As before, Synod was advised to approach organisations, such as Word and Deed, rather than church federations for this purpose.

Advancement and Enhancement of the Reformed Confessions in the GGRC

The Synod decided to advance and enhance the Reformed teachings in GGRC with the help of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, the United Reformed Churches in North America, and the Canadian Reformed Churches. This could take the form of courses for office bearers, or helping with the production of Reformed literature for the churches.⁶

As I mentioned earlier, I was deeply impressed by the Indonesian brothers' faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, their fellowship in the Spirit, and their love of God the Father, each other, and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord continue to bless them and make them a blessing to one another and to those outside their federation.

Respectfully submitted.
Dick Moes
Fraternal delegate

Appendix 3

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (EPCEW)

United Reformed Churches in North America
Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA)

February 1, 2019

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales
c/o Brother Falko Drijfhout

⁶ As Rev. Pol plans to retire on October 1, 2020, he hopes to provide assistance in this area.

Presbytery Clerk
Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales
63 Larchwood Keele
Newcastle-under-Lyme

Dear brother Drijfhout,

Thank you for the invitation to attend your upcoming Presbytery meeting where sister churches and other friends of the Presbytery come and share with you about the Lord's work in our denomination. Since we are unable to send a fraternal delegate, I have asked brother Richard Miller to write you a letter on our behalf since he has visited your biannual Presbytery meeting two years ago and he is thus known to you.

Warmest blessings in Him!

Dick Moes
Secretary CECCA

Dear Brothers of the EPCEW with Sister Churches and Friends:

It is with greetings in our Lord Jesus that we, the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA), extend our affection to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW).

The CECCA received the invitation to send a fraternal delegate to the EPCEW Biannual meeting with Sister Churches and Friends on Saturday 21 March 2020.

We regret that we are unable to send a fraternal delegate to the biannual meeting this year.

We did attend the biannual meeting in 2018 which was held in the city of Chelmsford, UK. It was a wonderful time of fellowship with the EPCEW and other Churches of like faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The fellowship and hospitality was indeed wonderful. Lord willing, we look forward to being with you again.

As a reminder that the URCNA continues to be a federation of approximately 120 congregations and church plants in Canada, Italy, and the United States. We celebrated our last Synod 2018 in Wheaton, Illinois. One notable distinctive of our Synod was that it was conducted contemporaneously with and at the same venue as the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church with which we maintain close ecumenical contact. There were many joint activities between us not the least of which, by the grace of God, was the collaborative work and publication of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal.

It will interest you to know that this same Synod Wheaton 2018 has tasked CECCA, which is a duly constituted and regular synodical committee, to investigate, evaluate and report to Synod 2020 on means and methods by which CECCA can best respond to requests from abroad for

diaconal assistance. Among the elements of our work has been to survey sister Reformed and Presbyterian denominations as to their practices and procedures in these types of matters.

As we look to the future, our next Synod, Lord willing, is scheduled 8-13 June 2020 at Redeemer University, in Ancaster, Ontario, Canada. We give thanks to our heavenly Father for the upcoming Synod. We heartily extend an invitation to the EPCEW to attend the URCNA “Synod Redeemer 2020.”

As we fight for the gospel, let us complete the task together in the name of Christ our Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. As we pray for the EPCEW, we ask that you pray of us as we continue to dedicate ourselves to our Lord’s Crown and Covenant.

Again, we regret that we are not able to visit you this year, but we hope that you will invite us to your next biannual meeting. We will make every effort to attend and be with you for the glory of God.

Affectionately in Christ,

RICHARD J. MILLER
For the Committee on Ecumenical Relations with Churches Abroad
49 S Church Street
Carbondale, PA 18407
turretini@gmail.com

Appendix 4

Fraternal Address to the Saints of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT) Riga, Latvia, February 2020

Pastors, brothers and sisters in the Lord,

It is a great joy to be in your midst and to enjoy a time of fellowship with the saints here in Riga. I bring you fraternal greetings from the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). Like the Apostle Paul who wrote of the church in Philippi, we in North America thank our God for what we hear of your partnership in the gospel, and we trust and pray that the good work that the Lord has begun in you, he will continue, and will bring to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6-7). I have enjoyed learning something of the history of your city and nation, but more importantly I have enjoyed seeing how the Lord has worked in your midst by the power of the Spirit. I thank you for welcoming me so warmly even as the weather in February is so cold!

My name is Ryan Glomsrud and I have served as an elder in the URCNA for several years now. More recently, I joined our federation’s Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad, or CECCA, as we refer to it. And although I am enjoying the opportunity to teach (and bring you greetings from Westminster Seminary California), the first reason I am here with you is to observe your love for Christ and your desire to advance his gospel as we prepare to enter

into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with those of you who belong to the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT). In this capacity, and on behalf of the URCNA, please allow me the opportunity to remind you briefly of the history of our federation as well as provide some information about the significance of this proposed phase of ecumenical fellowship.

The URCNA is a young federation that is just over 20 years old (formally organized in 1996). Our membership is around 25,000 saints who worship in approximately 125 congregations, including a number of church plants that have not yet been organized as independent congregations. We are served by nearly 1,200 elders and deacons along with 191 pastors or ministers of Word and Sacrament. Outside of North America, we are engaged in missions in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines, and Romania, and many of our churches engage in short-term mission projects organized on a local level. Together, we confess the Christian faith as summarized in The Three Forms of Unity (namely, the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort). We believe that these documents provide the fullest and most accurate summary of what God has revealed in Holy Scripture.

Along with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), we recently produced the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* which was printed along with the Ecumenical Creeds, the Three Forms of Unity, and the Westminster Standards. Because of the profound ecumenical and historical significance of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, our Synod and the OPC General Assembly had combined meetings two years ago in Wheaton, Illinois. While we conducted our particular business separately, we began each day united in song and worship, and ended each day in a combined meeting where we could share in each other's joys, labors and particular challenges. It was in that context that I first met Pastor Alvis Sauka as he addressed our Synod and had many conversations with other pastors and leaders.

As Reformed churches, we are called to confess our broader unity in a number of ways. Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism explains that as members of Christ we not only have communion with our Savior and share in all his benefits, but we use the gifts God has given us for the wellbeing of other members of the communion of saints. This is how the United Reformed Churches in North America understands our Ecclesiastical Contact and Ecclesiastical Fellowship relationships with other Reformed churches throughout the world. Because we are united to Christ by faith in a vertical sense, we are also united to each other in a horizontal sense. And we desire to come alongside other Reformed churches and encourage them and have them encourage us as we continue the journey of faith together.

Following a period of initial exploration called Ecumenical Contact, wherein we have studied matters of general concern to both of our churches (such as the place and importance and authority of the Scriptures, as well as the Reformed creeds and confessions, along with other matters of worship and polity), in this second proposed phase called Ecumenical Fellowship we are eager to proclaim our "oneness" with you in the body of Christ. This is the highest level of public fellowship wherein our unity is manifested by pulpit exchange, intercommunion, the exercise of mutual concern and admonition, and agreement and joint action in areas of pastoral work and common responsibility.

We share this official status of Ecumenical Fellowship with many Reformed churches around the world, in the Congo, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand, and Great Britain, for example. This

is evidence of the marvelous work of God in the world and a foretaste of the great diversity of the multitude of saints who will one day praise the Lord together in the new heavens and new earth.

In conclusion, I want to thank you for your hospitality and for this opportunity to address you as fellow believers and co-heirs of the kingdom. I regret only that my time among you is so short this trip. I do hope to return and continue this growing friendship. But I hope this brief address gives you a glimpse into who we are as the United Reformed Churches of North America. We look forward to sending you an official invitation to our upcoming Synod in Ancaster, Ontario, in 2020, and, Lord willing, strengthening our ecumenical ties. Until then, may the Lord cause His face to shine upon you all as you labor in His love, and for the glory of His name.

Humbly Submitted,
Dr. Ryan Glomsrud
Elder, URCNA

Appendix 7

Report on the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT)

General Overview

I was privileged to visit several ministers and elders of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT) in Riga, Latvia, this past February 2020. According to the pastors, there is no trace of a Christian culture or Reformed heritage in Latvia because of the communist legacy in the region. Ninety-nine percent of the members of the Evangelical Reformed churches are first-generation Christians. These brothers are therefore enthusiastic for and faithful to the Great Commission; their first priorities have been and must be for evangelism, outreach, and discipleship. The first congregation, Riga Reformed Bible Church, was founded in 1990 by the most senior minister, Pastor Alvis Sauka. There are now three congregations, with a second in Riga and a third on the outskirts of the city in Pardaugavas, along with various regional missions who are learning about Reformed theology. Regarding the latter groups, they hope that these will enjoy an organic process of moving from baptistic roots to a growing interest not only in the doctrines of grace but, Lord willing, a robust understanding of covenant, baptism, and ecclesiology.

It was a joy to be in their midst and fellowship with some of the saints. The pastors report that Latvians are coming to faith and growing in their trust in the Lord. The ministers feel that they themselves are learning on the job as many were engaged in ministry even before they studied at the Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary (BRTS). The seminary has been very important for the life of the church, although it is not officially connected to the denomination. It has been a source for Bible teaching, catechesis, and preacher training. Among the leaders, their love for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is evident and we should continue in prayer that the good work that the Lord has begun in them, he will continue and bring to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Trip Summary

I was picked up from the airport by an elder of the church and an administrator of the seminary, Jānis Perkons, and delivered to my hotel. Later, I enjoyed dinner and fellowship with Artis Celmiņš who is also an elder and director of the seminary. On Thursday, 19 Feb. 2020, I had the privilege of teaching for three hours at BRTS in a space that they rent on the third floor of an old Methodist church in Riga. BRTS students were in attendance, along with pastors, a handful of spouses, and other interested members of the broader Christian community, including a Lutheran minister in Riga and a ruling elder of the PCA who is working in Latvia as a member of a Mission to the World (MTW) team.

Friday, 20 Feb. 2020, I met with a group of pastors and elders of ERCLAT. The two-hour meeting, which began and ended with prayer, was a wonderful exchange of news and information, questions and answers. Overall, it was a valuable time of fellowship together. I began by reading the formal letter of greetings on behalf of the CECCA committee of the URCNA and then the discussion proceeded more informally. Those present included two elders, Jānis Perkons and Aleksandrs Timofejevs, a local business man. The ministers present were Alvis Sauka and Artis Celmiņš of Riga, along with Ungars Gulbis who is the church planter of the third congregation near Riga. A church intern and seminary student, Miroslavs Tumanovskis, was also present. They described the strength of their church as expository preaching and teaching such that they have a reputation in Riga as the place to go for those who want to learn what God's Word teaches openly, plainly, and in some depth of detail. In a time of mutual encouragement, we shared items for which we both are grateful to the Lord, along with matters of concern and requests for prayer (see below). After the meeting, I had a long lunch at a restaurant with Pastors Sauka and Celmiņš and we continued our discussion of many different challenges and opportunities facing our collective churches. That evening, I taught for another three hours at the Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary. My lectures surveyed the theology of the nineteenth century and then the life and legacy of Karl Barth. Despite the jetlag, I thoroughly enjoyed my time and had good and productive discussions in class and casually during coffee breaks.

The pastors and leaders of the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Latvia are grateful to the Lord for his kindness to their covenant children. Many of their members are young families with children, and sometimes the number of children nearly outnumbers the adults in Lord's Day worship. This is quite striking in comparison to Latvian society generally, where population and birthrates are static or in decline. They believe this is evidence of the life-giving nature of the Gospel and the joy of the Lord that believers have even in the midst of hardships. May the Lord continue to bless the covenant children as they grow in faith and knowledge of the Lord Jesus! The brothers are also thankful that their evangelistic efforts are showing fruit and that the members of the congregation support their outreach efforts with patience and understanding regarding time and travel. By God's grace, the Latvian churches are self-sustaining financially.

The men also spoke of the challenges of ministry in their context, given their political history with the Soviet Union and the current state of world affairs. More specifically, however, the brothers requested prayer and help finding qualified professors for the seminary who might be willing to come to teach short-term intensive courses. They have particular needs in practical theology as they look to start a three-year program in counseling for their pastors. They also go

before the Lord asking his help and aid, and for much wisdom, in discipling the periphery groups with whom they have contact. There are many conversations needing to take place regarding church government, baptism, and public worship. They desire to see these groups press on in maturity and ultimately come into communion with them as member churches of ERCLAT.

In conclusion, it was a very encouraging visit. Evidence of the Lord's work among them is everywhere present. The brothers are faithful in shepherding the flock of God among them, exercising oversight, not under compulsion or for shameful gain but willingly, eagerly, as good examples to the flock. May the Lord continue to bless them until the chief Shepherd appears.

Sincerely,
In Christ,

Ryan Glomsrud
Elder, Christ United Reformed Church in Santee, California
CECCA Representative, Classis Southwest of the URCNA



From left to right: Artis Celmiņš (seminary director), Aleksandrs Timofejevs (elder), Miroslavs Tumanovskis (intern and seminary student), Ryan Glomsrud (URCNA), Alvis Sauka (pastor), Ungars Gulbis (church planter), Jānis Perkons (elder).

Appendix 6

Address to the Synod of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI-NTT), held in Kakaha on the island of Sumba on August 6-9, 2019

Mr. Chairman, dear brothers,

It is a joy to be in your midst this week and to be able to attend your synod. Last year, I made a personal visit to Sumba and had the joy of introducing your theological students to an integrative model preaching for transformative proclamation. I spent five days on your island, both the east as well as the west side, and thoroughly enjoyed my time with brothers and sisters who are united to Christ through faith who address God as Abba Father through the Spirit of adoption as we do.

In Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism, we confess that we believe that as members of Christ we not only have communion with Christ and share in all his benefits and gifts, but that we are to use the gifts God has given us for the wellbeing of the other members of the church. This is how the United Reformed Churches in North America understand our Ecclesiastical Contact and Ecclesiastical Fellowship relationship with other Reformed churches throughout the world. Because we are united to Christ through faith vertically, we are also united to each other through faith horizontally. And we desire to come along side other Reformed churches and encourage them and have them encourage us as we continue the journey of faith to the new heaven and new earth.

As we are on our journey of faith to the new heaven and new earth, we have the awesome privilege of participating in God's mission for his glory or his drama of redemption in which he is restoring creation and humanity to the Sabbath rest of living in his loving presence and participating in his life in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The Father is the author of this drama; the Son is the main actor; and the Holy Spirit is the director and producer of the drama. The Bible is the script of the drama. And the church, as the theater of God's drama of redemption, performs the script of the drama on the stage of this world.

However, there is also an opponent to the church being the theater of God's drama of redemption and participating in God's mission for his glory on the stage of this world. That opponent is Satan. He uses our own sinful flesh and the stories of our idolatrous culture to capture our imagination and to tempt us to perform the script of those stories instead of or in addition to the script of Scripture. We as United Reformed Churches in North America feel the tension between those two stories every day. I am sure that you here in Indonesia feel the same tension. That is why it is so urgent to daily pray the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer: lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Because we participate in the same redemptive mission for God's glory and share the same struggles of faith as you do, we are here to offer you our encouragement for your faithful continuation in God's drama of redemption as church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The URCNA is a young federation that is just over 20 years old. Our membership is around 25,000 spread out over about 125 congregations, including a number of church plants that have not yet been organized as independent congregations. We are engaged in mission activity in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines and Romania. Together with the OPC we have produced the Trinity Psalter Hymnal with the Ecumenical Creeds, the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards in the back. Because of the profound ecumenical and historical significance of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal, our Synod and the OPC General Assembly had combined meetings last year in Wheaton, Illinois.

I am aware that your federation here in Sumba (GGRI-NTT) met in conferences with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia on the island of Kalimantan (GGRI-KB) and the Reformed Churches in Indonesia on the island of Papua (GGRI-Papua) and that in 2012 these conferences were formalized into a synod meaning that the three provincial federations have now together formed a national federation known as the GGRI-nasional. Thus, technically speaking, I am actually addressing a provincial synod today and not a national synod. But that is so because our contact with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia began with the GGRI-NTT and not with the churches in the other two provinces. However, because you are now part of a national federation comprising churches in three different provinces, I would think that it would be wise for the URCNA to work toward the Ecclesiastical Fellowship relationship with your national federation and not just with you. I trust that the Lord will give CECCA the wisdom to come with a proposal to our next synod in this regard since we have already been in an Ecclesiastical Contact relationship with you for more than four years and there are no outstanding issues that prevent us from entering into the Ecclesiastical Fellowship relationship with you.

Brothers, may the Lord of the church bless you and keep you. May he make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May he turn his face toward you and give you peace.

On behalf of the URCNA, I bring you our warmest greetings in Christ.

Dick Moes

Fraternal Delegate

Appendix 7

Report of the Visit to the Fifteenth Synod of the GGRI-NTT on August 5-9, 2019

After driving for some three hours with a taxi driver over paved and unpaved roads full of potholes, Rev. Pila Njuka, professor of Old and New Testament exegesis and homiletics at the Theological Seminary in Waingapu, Sumba, and I arrived in the remote village of Kakaha, Sumba, where the 15th synod of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timor (GGRI-NTT) was held from August 5-9, 2019.

The other Indonesian delegates as well as the two fraternal delegates from the Free Reformed Churches in Australia warmly welcomed us. Because both these fraternal delegates spoke and understood Indonesian, I was able to follow what was happening at synod with a great deal of comprehension. I was deeply impressed by the Indonesian brothers' faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Truly, for them "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved". I was also deeply impressed by their fellowship in the Spirit. Moreover, their love for God the Father, for each other and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ deeply warmed my heart.

I was also profoundly impressed by the professional manner in which they conducted their meetings. It was somewhat of a surreal experience to listen to 38 men debate the finer points of Reformed church polity in one of the most remote places on the island of Sumba. They never

voted once, but took all decisions by consensus. In order to reach this consensus the second clerk listened to the discussion and formulates a decision, which he then reads to synod. If there is no consensus to his evaluation of the discussion, another round of discussion takes place until all are in agreement. The discussion format is fairly strict with one delegate or sometimes two permitted to speak from each classis on each proposal. There are rounds of discussion. The other delegates quickly howl anyone speaking out of turn down. It was noteworthy that two classes from the remote regions often supported each other in the discussions and decision process and two classes from the city regions also often supported each other. Deputies from various committees are included in the synod and take an active part in the discussions.

Prior to synod, a prayer service was held during which three men were ordained into the ministry. Because all three men were from the same classis, and convening church of synod was in this classis, it was decided to combine the ordination of these men with the prayer service for synod for the sake of convenience. Two government officials were present ordination service and at the opening of synod. At the opening of synod, one of them spoke on behalf of the government.

Synod officially began Monday evening at 8 pm. I offer the following summary of some of the discussion points and decisions taken.⁷

The Board of Governors of the Theological Seminary

No report was received from the board of governors of the Theological Seminary, confirming that this board was not operational in any sense. Synod decided to appoint three new members to the board. Rev Arthur Van Delden, emeritus minister of one of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia and sessional lecturer at the seminary (in Indonesian) was appointed as an external advisor to the board of governors.

Location of the Theological Seminary

At the moment, the GGRI-NTT rents a facility in Waingapu, which it uses as its seminary. Some time in the past, the federation purchased a property in the same city with a view to building a new seminary campus there. However, the four classes seemed to be split 50/50 as to whether this is most desirable location of the seminary. Synod decided that work on the college buildings on the purchased property be continued and be responsibility of whole GGRI federation. When the current lease of the rental building expires in December 2020, the location where the GGRI-NTT used to have its seminary (about an hour and a half drive from Waingapu in the village of Waimarung) be utilized until such time as the buildings at Waingapu are fit for use. This entails buildings with six to eight bedrooms, four teaching rooms, a chapel and sufficient bathrooms for 35 students.

Relationship with the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC)

⁷ This summary could not have been made without the excellent notes taken by brother Eric de Haan and the consecutive oral translation by Brian Bosveld, the two fraternal delegates of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

The URCNA has an Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC). Rev. Yonson Dethan of this church federation has visited our synods a number of times. The GGRI-NTT also desires closer relationship with the GGRC. In order to achieve this, synod decided to encourage pulpit exchanges between churches belonging to both federations, beginning with churches on the islands of Timor and Savu, because travel expenses there would be minimal.

Relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv)

Each classis expressed concerns about developments in the GKv churches in the Netherlands and unanimously agreed that, due to the unfaithfulness of this federation, a letter be written advising them that unless there is sincere repentance and a return to the Reformed understanding of women in office, a proposal to sever ties will be sent to the National Synod to be held in 2020.

Seminars to Strengthen the Reformed Character of GGRI-NTT

Over the years, the Reformed character of the GGRI-NTT has eroded somewhat in various areas, such as the second service and catechism preaching. This concern is being addressed by holding seminars in the congregations to strengthen the Reformed character of the GGRI-NTT. It was decided to send a letter of thanks to Rev. Arthur Van Delden who has been very instrumental in encouraging these churches to get back on track in this area.

The 2nd Worship service

Proposal from internal deputies to ask the churches to commit to the 2nd worship service, with catechism preaching each Sunday, was discussed. It was noted that after receiving seminars, a number of churches have already committed to holding a 2nd service on Sunday afternoons. There was some hesitation from churches that had only just received newly ordained ministers, and who had a number of mission posts to serve in addition to their local church. Synod decided that all churches should work towards a 2nd worship service. Catechism preaching should be included in the 2nd service where possible, and on alternate weeks in churches where only one service is held each Sunday.

Baptism of Culturally Adopted Children

Because many villages are remote and many church members uneducated, it is difficult for many to fill in all the correct forms for adoption and register this adoption with the government. Consequently, cultural adoptions occur where some parents of children agree to give up their children to another family. This is normally done sitting down together with both extended families as witnesses. Synod decided to accept cultural adoption as a ground for allowing baptism of these infant children. While they are not legally adopted, they are in the permanent case of Christian parents. This decision is not applicable to foster situations where the care is not permanent.

Lord's Supper Celebration

Synod decided that in special circumstances the Lord's Supper could be celebrated on a day other than a Sunday when a minister is sick or there is no minister available. This will apply only to a vacant church and when a minister is not available on the scheduled Sunday. However, the sacrament must be administered together with the preaching.

Ministers entering into politics: review of previous synod decision

A minister entering into politics has been a contentious issue in the churches and the previous decision from synod 2016 was appealed. There are two conflicting views within the churches: one that allows for ministers to enter into politics while serving in office and one that does not. This matter invoked much—sometimes heated—discussion. This issue will be brought to the national synod in November 2020.

Retirement Age of Ministers

Due to the poor health of people in years past, the agreed retirement age for ministers was 60 years. However, because of health care and the economy having picked up, people are living longer. Accordingly, synod set the age of retirement 65 years health permitting. This will be phased in over a number of years so ministers close to the existing age of retirement will be not be adversely affected and may continue to serve until 65 if willing to do so.

The Name of the Federation

Synod dealt with an overture to change the name of federation from GGRI-NTT to GGRI. The reason for this overture was that not all churches are in the NTT province, but include churches or mission posts in Bali, and in Java (Malang, Dampit and possibly Solo in the future). The deputies were mandated to look into the process of what is involved in arranging a name change.

Abuse of alcohol

The issue of some ministers abusing alcohol was raised. Synod decided that if a minister was drunk or addicted to alcohol this should be dealt with according to the Church Order.

Jehovah's Witnesses

The Jehovah Witnesses are now allowed to promote their teachings within Indonesia, after having been declared a sect by the former governments. They have been active within some districts in Sumba, and have also approached members of the GGRI-NTT. A lively discussion took place on how best to prepare the church members to defend the gospel against this false doctrine. Synod decided that the true preaching from Scripture and the Catechism, teaching students in the catechism classes and at the seminary will be the best defence against false doctrines from this sect.

As you can see, quite a number of topics were discussed at this synod. The fraternal delegates we asked for their advice on the issue of ministers entering in politics, cultural adoption, and the Jehovah's witnesses. Advice was given on each of these topics.

As I mentioned earlier, I was deeply impressed by the Indonesian brothers' faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, their fellowship in the Spirit, and their love of God the Father, each other, and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord continue to bless them and make them a blessing to one another and to those outside their federation.

Respectfully submitted.
Dick Moes
Fraternal delegate

Appendix 8

United Reformed Churches in North America
Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA)

March 5, 2019

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
Inter Church Relations Committee
c/o Reverend Robin Tso
P.O. Box 30
Raymond Terrace, NW 2324
A U S T R A L I A

Dear brother Tso,

Thank you for the invitation to attend your upcoming General Assembly. Since we are unable to send a fraternal delegate this year, I have asked brother Doug Field to write you a letter on our behalf since he has visited one of your General Assemblies in the past and he is thus known to you.

Warmest blessings in Him!
Dick Moes
Secretary CECCA

Dear Brethren:

Hearty Greetings to the PCEA in the precious and holy name of Our Savior Jesus Christ:

CECCA is in receipt of your kind letter of February 12, 2019, inviting the United Reformed Churches in North America to send a fraternal delegate to your upcoming General Assembly to be held at Taree from May 7 to 10, 2019.

We will be unable to send a fraternal delegate to Synod this year.

I had the privilege of attending your Synod in 2016 at Mt. Druitt and fondly recall the warm and brotherly manner in which I was welcomed by you and received your excellent hospitality. In the course of attending your Synod in 2016 I was hosted in his own home by Brother Tom Reeve with whom I remain in contact and I enjoyed a lovely dinner at the home of Reverend Dennis and Elizabeth Muldoon. Dennis and Elizabeth visited the U. S. this past October. It was a pleasure to have them in my home in California and to attend with them services at my church Zion United Reformed Church in Ripon. Thus the PCEA and URCNA have remained in personal contact since 2016 when we first met. It is our anticipation and hope that we will continue to maintain this contact.

While we cannot attend your Synod this year in person, the URCNA extends warm fraternal greetings to you. We have you continually in our prayers and greatly enjoy having news of your progress there in Australia in spreading the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will continue to uphold your Synod and your individual congregations before the Throne of Grace and will ask God's blessings on all of its activities and proceedings both spiritual and administrative.

The URCNA continues to be a federation of approximately 120 congregations and church plants in Canada and the United States. We celebrated our Synod 2018 in Wheaton, Illinois late this past spring. One notable distinctive of our Synod was that it was conducted contemporaneously with and at the same venue as the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church with which we maintain close ecumenical contact. There were many joint activities between us not the least of which was the celebration of a joint Psalter Hymnal that they and we collaborated on over several years past and that, by God's grace, we were able to bring to full fruition at that time.

It will interest you to know that this same Synod Wheaton 2018 has tasked CECCA, which is a duly constituted and regular synodical committee, to investigate, evaluate and report to Synod 2020 on means and methods by which CECCA can best respond to requests from abroad for diaconal assistance. This has developed into a large task in which we are currently fully invested. Among the elements of our work has been to canvass sister Reformed and Presbyterian denominations as to their practices and procedures in these types of matters. If you have experience, comments, suggestions or other comment on this subject we ask that you do us the favor of forwarding them on to us at my address set forth below.

We are acutely aware that you like we face significant challenges in being the church of Jesus Christ in our post-modern, secular and highly technological world that is often so very hostile to Him and His Church. We ask that you pray for us as we continue to dedicate ourselves to preaching the Christ-centered gospel, to administering the sacraments and conducting church discipline when necessary, to catechizing our youth and to educating our laity. We will pray for you as you do likewise.

Again, we regret that we are not able to visit you this year, but we hope that you will invite us to your next Synod. We will make every effort to attend and be with you face to face at that time.

May God bless you and your Synod in every respect.

Sincerely in Christ,

DOUGLAS L. FIELD

For the Committee on Ecumenical Relations with Churches Abroad

817 De Pedrini Dr.

Ripon, California 95366

(209) 603-1513

Appendix 9

Fraternal Address to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland

Moderator, fathers and brothers,

It is a joy to be among you and address you this afternoon. My name is Jason Tuinstra. I have served as a pastor in the United Reformed Churches for just over 20 years. I currently chair our churches Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad - CECCA for short. In this capacity, I was able to attend your General Assembly two years ago and observe your love for Christ and desire to advance His gospel. While I was not able to spend a lot of time among you, it was valuable, nonetheless, to begin to forge the necessary relationships upon which my committee hoped we could build. And now, it is now my distinct honor to be the first to formally and officially bring you greetings on behalf of the United Reformed Churches in North America. You may not know much about us, so allow me to use my time to introduce you to the churches that I serve and represent.

The United Reformed Churches of North America was formally organized in 1996. This was an exciting time, but it came in light of a painful process. The preceding years were ones of heartache as we saw our former denomination surrender the authority of Scripture to the same issues that still plague the church today. After years of seeking to work against this erosive tide, the Lord graciously allowed the URCNA to organize.

Since 1996, the Lord has tremendously blessed the URCNA. We are a federation of 124 congregations spread throughout the United States and Canada. We consist of just over 24,000 souls, being served by nearly 1200 elders and deacons along with 191 pastors. We support 15 church plants across North America, along with other ministries. Outside of North America, we have foreign works in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Honduras, Italy and Romania. Many of our churches also engage in short-term mission projects organized on a local level.

While the ethnic and cultural background of our churches can be traced back to the Netherlands, there has been an increasing effort to cultivate an outward vision in our churches

with the rich theological heritage that we possess. This has been changing through the efforts of our federations' mission coordinator, annual mission conferences and the development of our mission committee's handbook entitled, "How to Plant a Reformed Church." Through these efforts there has been a significant revitalization of a missional emphasis within our local churches.

One relationship that we share in common with you is our connection to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We have cherished their friendship over the years, and just last year, we had a combined Synod and General Assembly in Wheaton, Illinois. While we conducted our particular business separately, we began each day united in song and worship, and ended each day in a combined meeting where we could share in each others joys, labors and particular challenges. We also used this combined assembly to officially receive the Trinity Psalter Hymnal, which was produced through a joint effort of the OPC and the URC. This was a particular milestone for our federation, having independently worked on this project for numerous years. It has been good for our churches to come alongside of the OPC as this illustrates how we can use our ecclesiastical relationships to mutually edify one another.

While it might be easier to experience the joy of this kind of ecumenical contact with churches and denominations that are apart of our local communities, we see the need for broader relations as well. This is why, early on, our federation began to form contacts with federations and denominations outside of North America. We currently have ecumenical relationships with churches in the Congo, New Zealand, South Africa, Indonesia, Latvia, Australia, England, Wales and even here with the Free Church Continuing.

Because we see these relationships as significant and meaningful, a number of years ago our committee began to plead with the Liberated churches of the Netherlands to make a clear biblical stand against the ordination of women to the offices of the church. Sadly, after many meetings and numerous pleadings, Synod 2018 approved CECCA's recommendation to cut off relations with the GKv given their determination to open all ordained offices to women. We did this with heavy hearts, but hopeful that God might yet use the blows of a friend to turn them from this dangerous course.

Our committee is currently tasked with studying how we might support churches with whom we have ecumenical relations and are in need of benevolent help. As you might imagine, this is a significant task and not easy. Two weeks ago, our committee met for an all day meeting mainly addressing this question. Part of our mandate is to consult other churches who may have experience or input regarding this matter. We would love to hear from you if you can offer any advice on this matter.

I want to conclude by thanking you for your hospitality and for the opportunity to address you as a fellow-laborer in the cause of our Savior and King. I hope this brief address gives you a little glimpse into who we are as the United Reformed Churches of North America. My prayer is, and has been, that on this building block, the Lord might establish a lasting, enduring relationship for the advancement of His kingdom. We look forward to sending you an official invitation to our upcoming Synod in Wellandport, Ontario in 2020. Until then, may the Lord cause His face to shine upon you all as you labor in His love, and for the glory of His name.

Humbly Submitted,
Rev. Wm. Jason Tuinstra
Foreign Delegate (URCNA)

Appendix 10

Report on the Free Church of Scotland General Assembly 2019

General Overview:

On Monday, May 20th, 2019, the proceedings of the 176th General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) began atop Edinburgh's Royal Mile in the historic St. Columba's Church. The evening session began with a challenging address from Isaiah 54 by the retiring moderator, Rev. Angus MacRae.

The General Assembly (GA) comprised some eighty commissioners, representing six presbyteries and over one hundred congregations. The business of this GA, not unlike every year, was to deal with reports from the six standing committees of the FCS (Board of Ministry, Board of Trustees, Mission Board, Psalmody and Praise Committee, Seminary Board and Ecumenical Relations Committee). The GA also has to take up the report of the General Assembly Business Committee.

Interspersed during the proceedings were addresses from a number of representatives of local organizations and foreign denominations, ours included. I had the privilege to address the assembly for first time and introduce the commissioners to the URCNA, encourage them in their labors and thank them for their hospitality. The GA concluded on the morning of May 23 with an address from the Lord High Commissioner. He was appointed by Her Majesty, the Queen, to address the GA on her behalf. With that, the 2019 GA of the FCS was adjourned.

The 2019/2020 Moderator:

Each year a new moderator is selected to oversee various administrative and official responsibilities for the FCS. He is also responsible to chair that year's GA. This year, the FCS welcomed Rev. Donald G. MacDonald as the 2019-2020 Moderator. He was warmly embraced by the assembly and is clearly beloved, being affectionally and simply referred to as "Donny G."

On Tuesday morning, Rev. MacDonald delivered his Moderator's Address. This was one of the most edifying, challenging and encouraging addresses I've heard in this kind of ecclesiastical context. His address was often referenced and quoted by commissioners throughout the GA. I consider it a personal highlight of my time at GA. You can find his printed address, along with a link to the YouTube video, at: <https://freechurch.org/news/moderators-address-2019>

GA Highlights:

1. **Missions:** 37% of Scots claim to have no religion. Fewer than 9% attend any kind of church. Less than 1% of Scotland regularly hears faithful biblical teaching. Surrounded by the daily experience of these statistics, the FCS has undergone a revitalization in the area of missions, not only globally, but locally. The Mission Board is divided into four

areas of focus: Church Planting, Church Development, Church Equipping and Global Mission. While there is much that is noteworthy in this area of the FCS, one highlight is their church planting effort. The FCS currently has eight church plants around the country. Half of these church plants are in the greater Edinburgh area. The problem they face is not a lack of enthusiasm for this work, but laborers to do the work. To meet this deficiency, their church planting has benefited from their simultaneous focus on church equipping. On a local level, churches are being equipped to be intentionally missional in their labors. To assist with this, two new initiatives have been set up: Generation19 and Gossiping the Gospel. With Generation19, congregations are encouraged to instigate locally driven evangelistic events, aided by the Mission Board. Gossiping the Gospel is a course which features a series of four videos with relevant teaching to assist people in being evangelistically minded. The material is designed for mid-week classes and/or small groups.

2. **Psalmody and Praise:** In 2003, the FCS sought to update the vocabulary and grammar of the Psalter with the publication of Sing Psalms. To make it widely available, they recently produced a mobile app called by the same name. This app includes the entire Psalter along with music files for accompaniment. The committee reported on the success of this app and encouraged its use. Also, since 2010, a number of FCS congregations have begun to sing accompanied Psalms and hymns (Prior to 2010 they would only sing unaccompanied metrical Psalms in worship). In 2018, the committee for Psalmody and Praise was tasked with producing a recommended list of hymns. At this GA, the committee reported that, due to the increasing breadth of material in use, and the general move away from a single hymnbook, it is an impossible task to produce anything like a comprehensive list of recommended hymns. The committee simply reminded the churches of their responsibility to choose songs that are consistent with Scripture and the doctrine of the Confession of Faith.
3. **Theological Education:** The Edinburgh Theological Seminary (ETS) is the official seminary of the FCS. The standing committee which oversees ETS reported that the work of the seminary continues to go forward in preparing suitably gifted men for gospel ministry as well as providing theological education for individuals pursuing other ministry roles (church workers, church planters, missionaries and religious education). One exciting item they reported on was the work of Dr. Alistair Wilson and Professor John Angus Macleod who have developed a Centre For Mission. The center is “intended to provide opportunities for mission-orientated education and training for the people of the FCS and for the wider Christian community in Scotland and beyond.” The center has been used extensively to host training events for elders, deacons and Sunday School Teachers as well as being used for Church Planting and Church Development events (sub committees of the Mission Board).

Conclusion:

The work that the Lord is doing in the FCS is noteworthy. The challenges that they have been through have refined them and are being used to revitalize them. Our federations share a mutual love of the Lord, a rich theological heritage, as summarized in our particular confessions, and a burden for the advancement of the gospel. It is the recommendation of this member of CECCA that we should pursue a deeper and more meaningful ecumenical relationship with the FCS.

Humbly Submitted,
Rev. Wm. Jason Tuinstra
Chairman of Ecumenical Committee with Churches Abroad (CECCA)

Appendix 11

Sudanese Reformed Church (SRC) Some information about SRC updated 1st January, 2018

Historical Background

Sudanese Reformed Churches (SRC) started as a small household fellowship in outskirts of Khartoum in 1992. It was an era when the Sudanese Islamic Government was determined to uproot and eradicate Christianity in Sudan. Life by then was extremely difficult for Sudanese Christians. In Southern Sudan, there was savage and destructive war between the SPLA/M and Government Islamic troops. This caused a huge displacement and suffering. It was only the Lord's grace that enabled the fellowship to grow. This fellowship gave birth to other three household fellowships in Khartoum. SRC in South Sudan is being seriously affected by the conflict which erupted in Mid-December, 2013. This conflict continues to affect millions of people in South Sudan. In spite of all these situations, SRC continues to grow in faith and Reformed witness particularly in war-torn South Sudan.

In February 2005, these four fellowships were organized as Christian denomination. They were instituted as churches under the name "***SUDANESE REFORMED CHURCHES***". On 31st October, 2005, the need for a governing body was discussed and a committee was formed. This would provide leadership and would govern these churches and ensure that matters of doctrine and life, and growth (in faith as well as numerically) are soundly grounded on Reformed faith as taught by the Reformers (Luther and Calvin). Reformed confessions and church order were adopted on the same year. With Peace signed between SPLA/M and Sudan Government in 2005, there was a great opportunity for preaching the gospel, teaching and church planting. Thus the 1st Synod of Sudanese Reformed Churches was held in Khartoum, Sudan on 17th-18th April, 2009. The 2nd SRC General Synod was held from 27th April to 5th May, 2011 in Juba, South Sudan. The 3rd SRC Synod was convened as from 8th – 11th May, 2013 in Malakal, South Sudan. SRC up to now cannot hold 4th Synod due to insecurity and logistical difficulties in South Sudan. Last year on 9th December, she celebrated her Silver Jubilee in the Lord's service.

Statement of Faith

SRC believes and confesses that the Holy Scripture both (Old and New Testaments) are the complete, inspired and normative Word of God and are the only infallible basis of faith and practice for Christian believers (2 Tim 3:16). SRC adheres to the Ecumenical creeds of the Christian Church: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasius and affirms to the Reformed Faith confession: Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and Canon of Dort.

Number of Churches

SRC has sixteen (16) churches grouped into classes (Khartoum and Juba) with more than 6000 membership:

Khartoum Classis

1. Three (3) in Khartoum
2. One (1) in Delami, Nuba Mountains,

Juba Classis

1. Two (2) in Malakal;
2. Four (4) in Juba
3. One (1) in Bor
4. One (1) in Bentiu
5. One (2) in Awiel
6. One (1) in Abbenoum
7. One (1) in Yei

18 small groups in different IDPs camps in South Sudan and refugee camps

Ordained Ministers and Elders

8. SRC has twelve (12) ordained ministers of the Word
9. SRC has seventeen (17) ordained ruling elders and (15) deacons.
10. SRC has seventeen (21) evangelists (leaders of churches where there is no ordained pastors of the Word).

Governing Body

SRC General Synod has four elected officers that oversee the smooth flow of SRC plans and activities:-

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary General
- Treasurer

The General Synod has five departments

- Mission Department
- Projects Department
- Education Department
- Finance and Property Department
- Peace and Advocacy Department

Our Plan

- Africa Redeemer College (ARC), Juba/Malakal
 - ARC aims to provide four year theological training for SRC future ministers of the Word and other related sister-churches plus provision of Christian education for teachers that will teach in public and private schools.

- SRC has already approved from the State Government of Upper Nile to begin this venture. A plot (15000 sq ms) has been allotted and ready as the proposed site of the college. War situation in the South Sudan has interrupted the plan of the college.
- Building of SRC Headquarters in Juba, South Sudan. The foundation of the building has been laid down and its progress has been halted by conflict that erupted last July, 2016 in Juba.
- Informal Training: would include conferences, workshops and seminars for evangelists, elders (teaching & ruling), youth and women leaders and married couples.
- Establishment of Christian Schools. Early 2017, SRC started a nursery and primary school in Mangateen, Juba South Sudan among the IDPs and she hopes to start more in the years to come.
- Fund generating projects (poverty and dependence are some of SRC major challenges).
- SRC has developed Ten Year Strategic Plan (2018-2028) and in this it is envisioned to plant 36 churches (11 in the Sudan and 25 in South Sudan); to start 16 Christian schools; five health centers and etc.
- **Publication**
 - Quarterly News letter (Cushite)
 - Creeds translation in Arabic and other Sudanese national languages
 - Establishment of Wabsite

Contact

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Appendix 12

Fraternal address to the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia held in Bunbury, June 18-26,2018

Dear moderator and delegates to Synod Bunbury,

I count it a privilege to be present at this synod and to bring you fraternal greetings from the United Reformed Churches of North America. I am humbled to be able to address this esteemed assembly of brothers and co-workers in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Allow me to begin my remarks with some information regarding the URCNA. The URCNA is a federation of churches that was formed in 1996 out the desire to maintain the historic testimony of the churches to the Reformed faith, as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity and to order its life by a Church Order that conforms to biblical and Reformed principles for the government, worship and ministry of the churches. While our history is relatively brief, we share with you a long and rich history that reaches back to the time of the Reformation in the 16th century. We cherish our rich inheritances in the Reformed faith and pray that, as we seek to hold fast to what we have received, the Lord will open doors of opportunity for ministering the gospel and making disciples from all nations.

Our federation gathers for a synodical conference (General Synod) at least every three years, but recently we have been meeting every two years. We send two delegates from each congregation, then divide the work into smaller subcommittees. The URCNA is divided into eight classes which (ordinarily) meet twice each year. We have 125 congregations, including mission works and church plants not yet officially organized spread throughout the United States and Canada. The federation consists of 16,000 communicant members and over 24,000 members in total, including baptized covenant children. Ministers in the federation have gathered from several different seminaries. The URCNA does not have a federation-operated seminary. A candidate for the ministry, having received a "call" from a congregation, and having successfully sustained a rigorous candidacy and ordination examination before his consistory and classis, is ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the URCNA. This process appears to be similar to yours. In fact as I reviewed your church order we have much in common. In our federation the classis is a broader assembly and the synod is considered the broadest assembly. The local consistory, which we consider the narrowest, comes to the broader assemblies for advice, but is the Final Authority/governing body. This also applies to church planting and mission work.

Our federation has constituted a number of synodical committees. Two of these committees have a mandate to initiate, respond to and cultivate ecumenical relations with other denominations and federations. These are CERCU(Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity), which devotes its attention to churches in North America. The second is CECCA(Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad), which I am a member of. Our responsibility oversees our relationships internationally, or abroad. The first official phase in our relationship with other federations or denominations is Ecumenical Contact. The second phase in a relationship is Ecumenical Fellowship where two denominations share an "oneness" despite geographical boundaries. According to the guidelines of CECCA, our ecumenical fellowship comes to expression in several ways: occasional pulpit fellowship, intercommunion, exercise of mutual concerns and admonition, agreement to respect each federation's discipline, joint action in areas of common responsibility and agreement to inform each other of changes in polity, doctrine or practice. Through CERCU we are in correspondence relations with 7 churches and in "fellowship" with 5 churches in North America, including the CanRC. Internationally, through

CECCA, we are in ecumenical fellowship with the (RCNZ)Reformed Churches in New Zealand, which we encourage you in your relationship with them. We also have the United Reformed Churches of Congo, GKSA(South Africa), GGRC-NTT(Indonesia), and FCC(Scotland the continuing church). We are in official contact with seven churches internationally.

Most recently, we are engaged in mission activity in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, India, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines and Romania. At Synod 2016 we officially appointed a mission coordinator who will help the churches pool financial resources to support missionaries and also provides help, logistics and direction to the missionaries and their work.

We just completed Synod 2018 Wheaton last week. A note of significance was that it was a combined meeting with the OPC General Assembly. The highlights included the release of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal that we produced in conjunction with the OPC. Other action included discontinuing relations with Reformed Churches of Netherlands (GKv) in a unanimous vote. We moved to Phase I Evangelical Contact with African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC) and to Phase II Fellowship with Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (EPCEW), which will require ratification by a majority of the consistories by December 31 to be adopted. We also adopted an “Affirmation Regarding Marriage” as a doctrinal statement.

Finally, I would like to encourage you brothers, as you seek to do God’s work in an increasingly secular world. Know that we will pray for you and ask that you keep these two points in mind. Pray for our ongoing process of seeking unity between our federation and other Reformed bodies. It is important to seek unity with those of like confession and practice. Second pray for the work of URCNA in evangelism and missions, that the Lord would prosper our efforts and use us to reach many with the gospel.

May the Lord bless you in your work and may the spirit guide you. Thank you
Gerald Swets

Appendix 13

Report of the visit to the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia held in Bunbury, June 18-26,2018

The 27th synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) was hosted by the Free Reformed Church of Bunbury, Western Australia but held at the Free Reformed Church of Southern River, which is in the southern suburbs of Perth, on the west coast of Australia. The journey was long, but the fellowship was warm. The entire trip was a blessing, as the week I spent with the brothers from Australia and the other International delegates was informational and inspiring. The synod was convened Monday evening and continued through Friday daily from 9am to 9pm. They continued the following Monday and Tuesday, after having the weekend off, to complete the agenda.

Synod was opened on Monday evening June 18th. Rev A Souman was elected as chairman in a series of votes. The synod consisted of 18 delegates representing the 20 churches. Each of the

three classes sent three pastors and three elders to serve as delegates. The foreign delegates were all welcomed individually, 17 delegates from 11 federations including the CanRC, the OPC.

There were delegates from three different federations in Indonesia, the GGRI, GGRC and GGRI Timor. I bring that your attention since we have relations with the GGRC and they have relations with the GGRI, but that is a different conversation. I was also able to meet with delegates from other federations that would like to begin discussion with us. This included the FRCSA (South Africa) and the DGK (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands-Restored). The DGK and GKN were encouraged to work toward unity with one another.

The business meetings were held with agenda item presented along with the report and recommendation of the deputies. The deputies were assigned at the previous synod three years prior and were given a specific mandate. Their report and recommendations were written and sent to all the churches. Each congregation had opportunity to respond to the report prior to synod. Those letters were also included as part of the agenda. Some of the agenda items were delegated to subcommittees. I was given the impression this was a new process, that they have not done this in the past. When the item or the committee report was given, there was a round where delegates could speak. After that round, the chairman asked if another round of discussion is required. If there was, delegates indicated their desire to speak. The clerk records the names of those who would like to speak, then the chairman calls them to address the group. If a consensus decided another round is not required, a vote is taken. Foreign delegates were scheduled to speak in the evening, so more visitors could be in attendance. I was invited to speak Thursday evening with the business portion of the URCNA to be conducted Friday morning.

Synod decision regarding URCNA

I addressed the synod on Thursday evening. Knowing the recommendations of the deputies from the agenda, I spent much of the week in discussions with the delegates. I indicated my desires for this meeting and heard their concerns. This also gave me the opportunity to get a better understanding of how much support there was to work with us. The agenda and the recommendations from the deputies were to continue to liaise with the URCNA and to report and provide recommendations at Synod 2021 on how to proceed. There was a letter from FRC of Launceston supporting Deputies' recommendation to continue contact with the URCNA. There was also a letter from FRC of Darling Downs, proposing to also mandate deputies to investigate and report on the URCNA's relationship with the PCEA, and to address the question of the consistency of their policy in regards to having a relationship with two different federations in one country, which we would have if we continued to develop relations with the FRCA and PCEA. There was also concern about relations with churches so far away from Australia, which was contrary to their guidelines. As a result of my discussions with delegates throughout the week, my speech dealt directly with what we have in common and how our concerns are also their concerns and the manner in which we handle them. We also have an opportunity to assist each other as we build relations with other federations. A perfect example of that was the many different Indonesian churches, how they are encouraging them to work to be in union with each other. A partner like us could also make similar recommendations to enforce their concerns.

The recommendation from the deputies was to continue to liaise with the URCNA and to recommend to FRCA Synod 2021 whether to proceed in establishing a sister church relationship.

2. To acknowledge the report submitted by the Deputies and thank them for their work. The recommendations were modified to discharge the deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to: a. stay informed and monitor the discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA; b. continue discussions with the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) of the URCNA; c. set aside funds to send one delegate to URCNA Synod Wellandport Ontario in 2020; d. submit a report of work completed, six months prior to the next synod.

Other agenda items included discussion of a local or regional seminary and a new Book of Praise. Currently they are sending all their seminary students to the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. Financially and logistically this is an issue. They also determined they would like to produce their own Book of Praise. They currently use the Canadian Reformed Book of Praise and decided it is time they have an Aussie Book of Praise. I was able to offer them some valuable insight and experience of assembling a new book and also the advantages of having a seminary close to your churches.

Two brothers from the RCN were there to address the synod regarding the 2015 decision of the FRCA to suspend their relationship with the Reformed Church of the Netherlands. It was then recommended and adopted to terminate that relationship with the RCN.

In closing it was a great experience and I am thankful you brothers gave me the opportunity to attend this synod. In my closing remarks at the end of my stay I shared with the assembly: The hospitality of my host family and you brothers was truly a blessing. It was evident as we enjoyed fellowship together this week, that we share many of the same issues, have many of the same challenges and move cautiously as we do. My impression of your federation and your churches could not be any better. May God be with you as you advance His kingdom. I look forward to welcoming your deputy to our synod in 2020.

Servant of the Lord and His Church

Gerry Swets, CECCA member

Appendix 14

EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH INDIA

Synodical Credential Committee (SCC)

Rev. Sanjeev Kumar Singh

RTI Road, Herberpur Uttarakhand

India 248142

January 12, 2020

Dear brother Moes,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We as ERC are so glad to submit the Form Letter. We as the churches are looking forward to entering into ecclesiastical contact and fellowship with the United Reformed Churches in North America. Following are the pieces of information that you have inquired:

1. The Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture

We confess that all sixty-six books of Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, and they are not sent or delivered by the will of men but that holy men of God spoke being moved by the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:27, 44; II Peter 1:21; II Tim 3:15-16). These sixty-six books are canonical and only scripture that establishes our faith and confessions. Having sole authority over congregations and over every Christian for formation of our doctrine and godly life.

We confess that only the sixty-six books and all that they content are sufficient to teach the entire manner in which God's chosen people could be saved, and can rightly believe in the triune God and perform the foreordained good deeds (Gal. 1:8; II John 10; Rev. 22:18-19; Deut. 12:32; Ephesians 2:8-10; I John 4:1; Colo. 3:17).

We also believe that Belgic Confession Article 5 and Heidelberg Catechism LD 7 are the faithful summary of the authority and perspicuity of Scripture, also Belgic Confession Article 7; Heidelberg Catechism LD 7; Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 1, 16-18; LC QA5, QA91; and SC QA1-3 teach authority and sufficiency of the scripture.

2. Creeds and Confessions

We hold dear the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. These creeds are taught in our churches and theological institutes. We hold dear two sets of confessions: the Three Forms of Unity (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort) and Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. These are taught in our churches, and we preach from them as well.

3. Formula of Subscription to the Confessions

We, the undersigned, Ministers of the Gospel, Elders and Deacons of the Evangelical Reformed Church federation, sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this our subscription that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity are faithful summary of the Word of God.

We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully defend the doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by our public preaching, teaching, or writing. We declare, moreover, that we reject all errors that militate against this doctrine, we have first signed consent to the Consistory, Presbytery, and now to the Synod, that the same may there be examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the Consistory, Presbytery, or Synod, under the penalty, in case of refusal, of being by that very fact suspended from our office.

4. Significant factors in our Federation's history, theology, ecclesiology and stands on ethical issues.

It is significant to note that Evangelical Reformed Church was initiated with prayers and financial commitments of Indian Presbyterians in the year 1999 and later Mid-America Reformed Seminary faculty members, as well as few of the United Reformed Churches in North America through Oak Glen URCNA in 2003 joined the church planting facilitation known as Mission of Peace-Making (MPM). ERC, therefore, is a outcome of URCNA. Most of our ordained ministers were trained through MPM's *Teaching Learning Events* (TLEs) and later they graduated from Reformed Theological Institute (RTI). We hold to the reformed theology. Our ecclesiology is reformed in its doctrine and we are Presbyterian in our church polity. Therefore, our assemblies are named with combination of reformed terms and Presbyterian terms *Consistory, Presbytery and Synod*.

For all our Ethical issues we follow confessional and biblical precepts. We are prolife, and many other cultural ethical issues we make Calvinistic/Reformed confessional appeal to third use of the Law of God. There are various cultural issues such as dowry, food sacrificed to the idols, and participating in the Indian Hindu festivals; those issues we handle with larger biblical principles so that we do not compromise reformed doctrines and remain confessionally evangelical in our clarity of understanding and in practices.

5. Church Order and Polity:

The Church Order is attached to the end of this document. It's reformed in doctrine and has three offices *minister of the Word and Sacrament, Elder, and Deacon* help by men.

6. Liturgy and Liturgical Forms:

ERC has adopted all the Liturgy and Liturgical Forms from the back of the URCNA used Psalter especially the forms of *Baptism, Lord's Supper, and Ordination*. ERC has started working on editing these forms any in our Synod of 2021 they will be presented before Synod for the final approval. ERC has Indian Psalms and Hymns songbooks.

7. Preaching, Sacraments and Discipline:

Preaching: We preach Christ (I Corinthians 1:23) according to the Scripture and with exegetical approach to the Word of God in Indian languages along with the original languages of the Old and New Testaments. We encourage our ministers to consult *Calvin, Bavinck, Historical theology, Confessions, Puritans, and Indian theologians* in the preparation of preaching and teaching.

Sacraments: We hold to two Holy Sacraments: *Baptism* of all new adult converts, as well as the Covenant Children of the believers; We observe monthly closed *Lord Supper*.

Discipline: ERC uses her Church-Order to deal with issues of discipline under three assemblies namely, beginning with a Consistory then as per the need it may go to a Presbytery, and then finally to the Synod. Synod is the final and highest court.

8. Theological Education for ministers and information regarding our current ecumenical relations.

Theological Education for Ministers: All our ministers are graduates of the following institutions:

1. Reformed Theological Institute (RTI), Herbertpur India
2. Presbyterian Theological Seminary (PTS), Dehradun India
3. Mid-America Reformed Seminary (M-ARS), Dyer, IN USA
4. Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI USA

ERC's Current Ecumenical Relations:

1. The Calvinist Reformed Church in Indonesia (GGRC-NTT), (Since 2019)
2. Reformed and Presbyterian Fellowship India (Since 2010)

Thank you so much. Please feel free to ask any questions that may arise. We look forward to sending our delegates to your 2020 Redeemer Synod.

Sincerely yours,
Rev. Sanjeev Kumar Singh
Secretary
Evangelical Reformed Church India
Email: sanjeevtft@rediffmail.com
Phone: 91-9412916591



Appendix A to CECCA Report and Recommendations

Report on NAPARC World Missions Consultation, September 17-18, 2019 at Orthodox Presbyterian Church Administrative Offices, Willow Glen, Pennsylvania

I had the opportunity of attending the NAPARC World Missions (and Diaconal Services) Consultation that was organized primarily by Brothers Mark Bube and Douglas Clawson of the OPC. The consultation took place at the OPC's administrative offices in Willow Glen, Pennsylvania on the afternoon of September 17 and the morning of September 18, 2019. The meeting followed typical NAPARC practice whereby each member church made its report, questions were entertained and the previously reporting denomination prayed for the one reporting.

As you know CECCA is tasked with reporting to Synod Wellandport in 2020 its recommendations as to effectively providing diaconal assistance to needy churches abroad and in

that connection to ascertain the practices of our sister reformed denominations and federations and to solicit input from our own Missions Committee and that of organizations providing such types of assistance.

In attendance were nine member churches of NAPARC including one or more representatives of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP), Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), Free Reformed Church (FRC), Heritage Reformed Church (HRC), Orthodox Presbyterian Church, (OPC), Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), Presbyterian Reformed Church (PRC), Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (PRCNA) and our own URCNA. Also in attendance was Rob Brinks, Administrative Director of Reformed Mission Servicers (RMS).

Each of the churches' representatives made a presentation detailing its world missions activities and (in most cases) its processes and policies for extending diaconal assistance. My brief report of the information provided by each denomination follows:

ARP: Heiko Burkin made this presentation. The ARP's "World Witness" program concerns itself at present primarily with refugees in Europe. These are mainly Turks in Germany and France. World Witness has presence in both Strasbourg and Nantes, France. The Nantes activity is concerned with refugees from Chad. In addition, they continue to be active with a hospital and several schools in Pakistan and have a pastor in Lithuania endeavoring to revitalize the reformed church there. Outreach North America (ONA) reaches out to refugees coming o the United States.

ARP has no formal diaconal arm.

CanRC: The CanRC was well represented by three people, Mike De Borsek, Connie Peet and John Smid. They made a nice PowerPoint presentation on behalf of Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund (CRWRF). CRWRF dates back about 50 years and started as a movement to relieve hunger around the world. It does disaster relief and rehabilitation work. It has extensive reach and when it puts out a call for funds it is usually successful in acquiring significant response. Primary interest is in HIV/AIDS assistance, providing disaster assistance and refugee assistance. It also has a community development arm that concentrates on assisting orphans in Kenya, Mali, Timor, Senegal (especially in the wake of the Ebola crisis) and South Africa. Finally, there is a global awareness and education activity that works in Christian education curriculum development, social media and sending high school students on work projects.

Of great interest was these representatives' discussion of the structural organization of CRWRF. This is described as "organic" and not closely tied to the CanRC central organization. It is incorporated as a Canadian charity. The Board of Directors consists of 25 people all of whom are members of Canadian Reformed or sister churches including two from the URCNA. The board is all volunteers and CRWRF has no employees. Each board member has a "liaison" responsibility and is individually responsible in that capacity for an aspect of the group's activities. CRWRF has member churches and sent out a letter to all CanRC congregations advising them they were members unless they opted out. Evidently not many did. Technically CRWRF is under the authority of their member churches and affirmatively not of the CanRC Synod.

In terms of specific diaconal assistance to needy churches abroad there is nothing formal as they are “very decentralized,” but it is obvious that CRWRF frequently receives and deals on a case-by-case basis with such requests.

FRC: The presenter was Duane Rogers. Their missions arm has been active in Guatemala since the 1980’s. They are involved in church planting and the development of indigenous pastors there.

In terms of diaconal assistance the FRC works with parachurch organizations such as Word and Deed. They have a preference for assisting in “theological education” and they are concerned with avoiding the creation of dependency through their missionary and diaconal activities.

HRC: Bill Tanis represented this very small denomination. It has nine congregations. The HRC has a missions board. In the past they had been investing heavily in infrastructure but all that investment has been recently lost so they now concentrate on supporting missionaries around the world. They are waiting on Gods leading as to where they should go in the future.

There is no diaconal board in the HRC. Individual churches get involved in diaconal activities on their own. Most support Word and Deed. Their Disaster Relief Committee makes recommendations to the individual congregations as to where to send funds.

OPC: Mark Bube made this report. OPC has a Committee on Foreign Missions. Unhappily in the past year five of their missionary families in China and Uruguay have needed to come home from the mission field. On the more positive side they have missionary works ongoing in Eritrea, Ethiopia and Haiti, Quebec, Uganda, Ukraine, They are ready to explore a much higher level of missionary support.

The OPC has a Committee on Diaconal Assistance. It is comprised of three pastors, two ruling elders and four deacons. The committee meets four times a year and is divided into subcommittees. It has a budget of \$300,000 per year that works out to about \$25.00 per communicant member across the denomination. Brother Bube commented that, “When disasters happen, money pours in. We never ask for funds. We say we will receive funds and much more than the \$300,000 comes in.” Diaconal needs outside the direct purview of the OPC are rare. They do respond to needs generated by war, disaster, famine and persecutions. Word and Deed recently provided a large donation for disaster relief.

As to foreign diaconal assistance the OPC appears to concentrate heavily on disaster relief. It receives funds and volunteer information from other NAPARC churches. It has worked closely with RMS in the past on disaster relief. Their guiding principles are ministering both word and deed, understanding the principle of concentric circles in which concentration is closest to home first, there is wisdom in numbers and concentration on needs that are placed in their path.

PCA: Lloyd Kim offered comments on behalf of the PCA. This is, of course, a large denomination and its “sending agency” is Missions to the World (MTW). This denomination is in the midst of a time of extensive self-reflection. It seems currently to be unsure of its footing.

As a result the presentation was somewhat scattered and cast in general concepts rather than specific activities. Brother Kim commented that the denomination is facing many challenges and that their situation is “confusing.”

There was little specific that I could glean as to the “on the ground” practical specifics of how the PCA accomplishes its extension diaconal assistance.

PRC: Tim Worrell made this presentation. This small denomination is working, as it has done for many years, in Liberia. This is a long-term and difficult ministry. Liberia reportedly has just surpassed Haiti as the poorest nation earth.

In terms of diaconal assistance, Tim indicated that, “We are more word than deed considering our small size.” They maintain a close relationship with Samaritan’s Purse.

RPCNA: Heather Huizing made this presentation. The RPCNA’s mission arm is RP Global Missions. They are on four fields as the present time including, Pakistan, India South Sudan and Japan. They are in the process of commissioning a Congregational Missions Advocate (CMA) in each of their 100 congregations and have about 25% penetration at the current time. The CMAs act as the contact points between the congregations and RP Global Missions.

No specific or discrete diaconal assistance activity was mentioned other than that in appropriate cases those efforts are “seconded” to experienced organizations but no one was directly named.

Rev. Richard Bout attended, as the URCNA’s representative and reported to the Consultation on our missionary activities.

Rob Brinks made a formal PowerPoint presentation on behalf of RMS. He described in detail the several ways in which RMS is equipped to and has been providing diaconal assistance in recent years.

I engaged Rev. Bout in a discussion of the current status of our Missions Committee’s thinking in respect of providing diaconal assistance abroad and he was currently unable to offer anything specific. He did suggest that CECCA and the Missions Committee meet soon and have detailed discussions of this matter.

Working recently with Word and Deed in the matter of assisting the United Reformed Church in the Congo with a school building project, CECCA learned much of its preferred processes and procedures. Our familiarity with Word and Deed has occurred against the backdrop and with the perspective of a significant request from the URCC to assist in the construction a Christian school building in the city of Mbujimaya Batiment at a currently estimated cost of approximately USD \$175,000.

In response to the URCC’s request, CECCA enlisted the advice and counsel of Rick Postma at Word and Deed. He indicated that in Word and Deed’s experience it might be unadvisable to start diaconal assistance to the URCC with such a large project. Our joint thinking became that it would be preferable first to explore whether CECCA and Word and Deed in partnership could

assist the URCC in the matter of theological education and the training of qualified pastors.

In furtherance of this goal, Brother Postma organized a conference call among Rev. Kabongo of the URCC, himself, CECCA Chairman Rev. Jason Tuinstra and me. This was a detailed conversation at which Rev. Kabongo provided much needed information. There were additional questions posed as to which he did not have answers at his fingertips and we continue to await his further response. Brother Postma recently followed up, but as of the date of this report I have heard nothing additional.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend this interesting Consultation.

Sincerely,

DOUGLAS L. FIELD

September 24, 2019

In addition CECCA Approached and received responses from the Reformed Church in the United States (“RCUS”) and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). They advised:

- a. RCUS: The RCUS receives requests at a synodical level through a standing committee. When a request is deemed worthwhile a recipient may receive funds either directly from one of their churches or from the synodical treasurer. Procedures for accountability are not clear.
- b. FSC (Continuing): The FCS (Continuing)’s Ecumenical Relations Committee has no explicit mandate. Their Stated Clerk passes requests to appropriate bodies within the denomination. Their Finance & Sustentation Committee must approve any expenditure. The Stated Clerk vets and passes requests on (or not) as he deems appropriate.

Appendix B to CECCA Report and Recommendations

Task Outline

- I. The precise task assigned by Synod:
- II. Revision and updating of CECCA mandate:
- III. Assessing the potential need for CECCA diaconal response
 - a. Types of potential requests:
 - i. Financial (i.e. money only)
 - ii. Goods and materials: Integrated projects (i.e. construction of Christian school building) Personnel/craftsmen/professionals Advice and counsel
 - b. Disaster relief
 - c. Size and scope of requests
 - i. Dollar amounts

- ii. Project duration
 - iii. On site presence/oversight required
 - iv. Location considerations
 - 1. Political stability/instability
 - 2. Ease/difficulty of travel
 - 3. Visas/travel permits
 - 4. Integrity/corruption of local authorities
 - 5. Health and disease considerations
 - d. Frequency of requests
 - i. Review of recent history of types and scope of requests received
 - ii. Assessment of likely frequency, types and scope for anticipated requests
 - e. Potential for securing outside assistance
 - i. URCNA Missions Committee
 - ii. NAPARC and ICRC federation/denominations and their diaconal assistance organizations
 - iii. Non-NAPARC/ICRC federations/denominations
 - iv. Organizations with whom federation has ongoing relationships
 - 1. RMS
 - 2. Word and Deed
 - 3. MINTS
 - v. NGOs
 - vi. Governmental entities, ministries, departments
 - vii. Other secular organizations
- IV. Plan of Action and Protocols
 - a. Establish CECCA Diaconal Response Sub-Committee
 - i. Mandate
 - ii. Constituency
 - 1. CECCA members
 - 2. Outside members
 - 3. Specialist consultants
 - 4. Required ratio pastors to elders
 - iii. Frequency of meeting
 - 1. Regular
 - 2. Ad hoc
 - b. Develop policies and protocols
 - i. Establish policy and procedures manual
 - ii. Solicitation of requests
 - iii. Evaluation and vetting of requests
 - 1. Application forms, formalities and supporting paperwork
 - 2. Obtaining trustworthy references
 - 3. Securing independent confirmation of claimed needs
 - 4. Recognizing and avoiding fraudulent requests
 - iv. Establishment of lines of communication with requesting parties
 - v. Evaluation and vetting of partnering organizations
 - vi. Constituency of diaconal teams
 - 1. Adults

- 2. Youth
 - 3. Sponsors and supervision
 - vii. Follow up and evaluation
 - 1. “After action” reports
 - 2. Continued monitoring, supervision and assistance
 - 3. Assessment of further need
 - c. Budgets and financial controls
 - i. Sources of funds
 - ii. Administrative budget
 - iii. Budgets for individual projects
 - iv. Bookkeeping/auditing/reporting
- V. Staff requirements
 - a. Paid staff
 - b. Volunteer staff
 - c. Job descriptions
 - d. Qualifications and background checks
- VI. Prayer support
 - a. Dissemination of prayer requests
 - b. Prayer coordinator
- VII. Fundraising
 - a. Synodical appropriations
 - b. Regular appeals/askings
 - c. Special events
- VIII. Reports and public relations
 - a. Bi-annual report to Synod
 - b. Other periodic reports
 - c. Newsletter

Appendix C to CECCA Report and Recommendations

Policies, Practices and Protocols for Diaconal Response by the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad to Requests for Assistance

I. The precise task assigned by Synod:

Leading up to Synod Wheaton 2018, CECCA issued a full report on its recent activities and made several recommendations including that Synod address the question of how CECCA going forward might most effectively address diaconal-type requests for assistance from needy churches abroad with whom the URCNA is in either Ecclesiastical Contact and Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

Synod Wheaton 2018 took this matter up and formally responded to CECCA's recommendation. Synod Wheaton 2018 has directed CECCA as follows:

“That Synod direct CECCA to study how the URCNA might support needy churches abroad with which we have ecumenical contact (Phase 1) or fellowship (Phase 2) and to report back at our next synod. In its research, CECCA should consult with the URCNA Missions Committee, sister churches, and relevant organizations. That this be Synod's response to CECCA Recommendation #7.

Grounds:

a. In Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 55, we confess in answer to the question about the meaning of the communion of saints: “First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts. Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and joyfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.

b. CECCA receives a variety of requests, such as financial support for fraternal delegates to travel to our synod meetings, construction projects, and facilitating theological training.

c. CECCA has no policy to direct its members in how to deal with these requests.

d. In practice, members of CECCA have sought private financial support for fraternal delegates to travel to our synod meetings.

e. Consulting with the Missions Committee will prevent overlap.

f. The URCNA has much to learn from sister denominations and relevant organizations.”

II. Revision and updating of CECCA mandate:

At present CECCA has no formally adopted mandate. It is respectfully recommended that one be proposed and submitted for approval and enactment by Synod. In this connection, it is noted that our sister committee CERCU has a formal mandate. Adoption of a specific mandate for CECCA would assist in defining and refining CECCA's mission and the scope of its activities. It would assist in directing, limiting and sharpening the focus of CECCA's activities going forward.

A possible form of mandate might be as follows:

The Committee for Ecumenical Contact With Churches Abroad shall pursue and make recommendations regarding the establishment of ecumenical relations with those Reformed and Presbyterian denominations/federations outside the United States and Canada selected by synod and in keeping with Article 36 of the Church Order. The Committee shall execute its task and carry out its mandate by following synod's Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity. The Committee may receive and act upon requests for aid and assistance from churches abroad in need thereof in accordance with Policies, Protocols and Procedures that it shall from time to time propose to Synod and that Synod shall approve of and ratify.

The committee shall keep the churches regularly informed of its work and progress made, and shall publish its reports to synod in the agenda. (This is a modification and adaptation of the current CERCU mandate.)

III. Assessing the potential need for CECCA diaconal response: I have detailed these as best as I have been able to imagine them and have added

- a. **Types of potential requests:** In order to develop a workable and comprehensive proposal careful consideration should be made in advance of the types of requests for assistance that may be made to CECCA. Requests can be expected to come in diverse forms and for varying types of help including monetary, material, logistical, professional, advisory and mentoring.

From the outset clear definition and limitation should be made of the focus and scope of the matters and types of diaconal response that CECCA and the Federation have the desire, willingness, capacity and resources to make. It will be advisable to set guidelines and limits in various foreseeable categories and to provide guidance and direction as to the manner in which requests exceeding those guidelines will be processed and forwarded to outside agencies which may have the capability of handling them.

As a starting point for discussion and at a minimum the following types of requests can be anticipated:

- i. **Financial (i.e. money only):** Dollar amount will of course vary and with exchange rates may seem very reasonable. Once it becomes known that CECCA is available to assist, the number of requests and their frequency can be expected to increase.
- ii. **Goods and materials:** Anticipate requests for specific types tools, equipment, both heavy and light (Bobcats to jackhammers to shovels and hoes) and materials such as roofing, siding, windows, piping, wiring and the like which may be available only (or only of high quality) in North America. Decide whether to do requests in kind or translate into dollars. Shipping costs along with customs and border considerations will have to be taken into account.
- iii. **Integrated projects (i.e. construction of Christian school building):** This type of request might contemplate both monetary and/or in kind material assistance together with on site supervisory and advisory presence during execution.
- iv. **Personnel/craftsmen/professionals:** We should expect requests for supply of journeymen in a likely large number trades (ground preparation, concrete, carpentry, masonry, roofing, plumbing, electrical) as well as professional expertise (engineering, architecture, medical, legal, planning and governmental affairs).

- v. **Advice and counsel:** This could be needed and given either by written correspondence, by video/audio conferencing for up to a moderately extended period on site, off site or both.
 - vi. **Potential for utilization of youth, adult and mixed teams:** Sending out teams of different constituencies (obviously youth teams are easier to organize in the summer months) may prove to be an effective and productive method for rendering assistance. Much benefit accrues both to the team members and the recipients of their work. Fortunately the process and logistics of organizing and sending are known and available.
 - vii. **Disaster relief:** in recent years this has more often been necessitated by hurricanes, tornadoes, and other wind and rain events, flooding, mudslides, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.
- b. Size and scope of requests:**
- i. **Dollar amounts:** Dollar amount and number of requests per specific period of time limitation should be established as well as one time response vs. recurring requests and possible limits in various eventualities (i. e. max. from CECCA for church land purchase = \$50,000). **Project duration:** Limits on the length of time that a project will take to fully complete should be decided. In addition, it is common in places like Latin America that people build as they can. They often have a multi-story building planned and complete it in phases one floor at a time as resources allow. **On site reconnaissance/presence/oversight required:** Whether or not to establish a requirement that a preliminary site visit be required and the level of presence during the execution of a project should have careful attention. We should establish a reputation for closely monitoring any project in which we take part.
 - ii. **Location considerations:** This is sensitive because requests for help are more likely to come from locations where conditions of all types on the ground will be challenging. Facing such challenges should be embraced as an integral part of the work of assistance. We should be prepared to confront the following:
 1. **Political stability/instability**
 2. **Ease/difficulty of travel**
 3. **Visas/travel permits**
 4. **Currency restrictions**
 5. **Integrity/corruption of local authorities**
 6. **Health, disease and inoculation considerations, availability of suitable food and water, parasites and other dangerous pests:**
- c. Anticipated frequency of requests**
- i. **Review of recent history of types and scope of requests received:** Recent experience as well as the number and location of our ecumenical relationships abroad imply that 1 to 3 requests per year might be anticipated. We should be prepared for this number to increase over time as word gets out that we have the capacity and facilities to help.
 - ii. **Assessment of likely frequency, types and scope for anticipated requests:**

- d. Potential for securing outside assistance
 - i. URCNA Missions Committee: We are specifically tasked to coordinate with the Missions committee. I anticipate that those discussions will be lengthy and detailed.
 - ii. **NAPARC and ICRC federation/denominations and their diaconal assistance organizations:** To a certain extent we have initiated this process in that we made inquiries and have received back answers and information from several of these groups. We should stay in contact and plan to render mutual assistance when appropriate. Please note that our sister committee CERCU spends a week every November with the NAPARC brethren so that regular and close contact is preserved. In addition we currently have the benefit of at least 2 of our CECCA members also on CERCU. Similar considerations apply relative to ICRC.
 - iii. **Non-NAPARC/ICRC federations/denominations:** It would be fair to imagine that there are huge resources here but theological/doctrinal issues will likely dictate that extensive collaboration will be impracticable.
 - iv. **Organizations with whom our federation has ongoing relationships**
 - 1. RMS
 - 2. Word and Deed
 - 3. MINTS
 - v. NGOs
 - vi. Governmental entities, ministries, departments
 - vii. Other secular organizations

IV. Plan of Action and Protocols

- a. Establish CECCA Diaconal Response Committee of the Whole or Sub-Committee
 - i. Mandate
 - ii. Constituency
 - 1. CECCA members
 - 2. Outside members
 - 3. Specialist consultants
 - 4. Required ratio pastors to elders
 - iii. Frequency of meeting
 - 1. Regular
 - 2. Ad hoc
- b. Develop policies and protocols
 - i. Establish policy and procedures manual
 - ii. Solicitation of requests
 - iii. Evaluation and vetting of requests
 - 1. Application forms, formalities and supporting paperwork
 - 2. Obtaining trustworthy references
 - 3. Securing independent confirmation of claimed needs
 - 4. Recognizing and avoiding fraudulent requests
 - iv. Establishment of lines of communication with requesting parties
 - v. Identification of local individuals of confidence and responsibility

- vi. Evaluation and vetting of partnering organizations
- vii. Constituency of diaconal teams
 - 1. Adults
 - 2. Youth
 - 3. Sponsors and supervision
- viii. Follow up and evaluation
 - 1. “After action” reports
 - 2. Continued monitoring, supervision and assistance
 - 3. Assessment of further need
- c. Budgets and financial controls
 - i. Sources of funds
 - ii. Administrative budget
 - iii. Budgets for individual projects
 - iv. Bookkeeping/auditing/reporting
- V. Location and assignment of follow up to congregations interested in long term relationship
- VI. Staff Requirements
 - a. Paid staff
 - b. Volunteer staff
 - c. Job descriptions
 - d. Qualifications and background checks
- VII. Prayer support
 - a. Dissemination of prayer requests
 - b. Prayer coordinator
- VIII. Fundraising
 - a. Synodical appropriations/askings
 - b. Specific project appeals
 - c. Regular appeals
 - d. Special events
- IX. Reports and public relations
 - a. Annual or bi-annual report to Synod
 - b. Other periodic reports
 - c. Newsletter

Appendix D to CECCA Report and Recommendations

(Proposed) Response By CECCA To Synodical Request For Study of How The URCNA Might Support Churches Abroad With which It Has Ecumenical Relations

CECCA Responds and Recommends as follows:

2. Synod’s Request:

- a. Leading up to Synod Wheaton 2018, CECCA issued a full report on its recent activities and made several recommendations including that Synod address the question of how CECCA going forward might most effectively address diaconal-

type requests for assistance from needy churches abroad with whom the URCNA is in both Ecclesiastical Contact and Ecclesiastical Fellowship

- b. Synod Wheaton 2018 took this matter up and formally responded to CECCA's recommendation. Synod Wheaton 2018 has directed CECCA as follows:

“That Synod direct CECCA to study how the URCNA might support needy churches abroad with which we have ecumenical contact (Phase 1) or fellowship (Phase 2) and to report back at our next synod. In its research, CECCA should consult with the URCNA Missions Committee, sister churches, and relevant organizations. That this be Synod's response to CECCA Recommendation #7.

Grounds:

- a. In Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 55, we confess in answer to the question about the meaning of the communion of saints: “First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts.
- b. Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and joyfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.
- c. b. CECCA receives a variety of requests, such as financial support for fraternal delegates to travel to our synod meetings, construction projects, and facilitating theological training.
- d. CECCA has no policy to direct its members in how to deal with these requests.
- e. In practice, members of CECCA have sought private financial support for fraternal delegates to travel to our synod meetings.
- f. Consulting with the Missions Committee will prevent overlap.
- g. The URCNA has much to learn from sister denominations and relevant organizations.”

3. Revised Mandate:

In order to proceed effectively in this matter CECCA will benefit from revision of its formal synodical mandate. Currently CECCA's mandate is informal and not formally adopted. Adoption of a specific mandate for CECCA would assist in defining and refining CECCA's mission and the scope of its activities. It would assist in directing, limiting and sharpening the focus of CECCA's activities going forward especially in respect of diaconal response to requests from abroad for assistance and help.

CECCA requests synodical approval of a revised mandate as follows:

The Committee for Ecumenical Contact With Churches Abroad shall pursue and make recommendations regarding the establishment of ecumenical relations with those Reformed and Presbyterian denominations/federations outside the United States and Canada selected by synod and in keeping with

Article 36 of the Church Order. The Committee shall execute its task and carry out its mandate by following synod's Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity. The Committee may receive and act upon requests for aid and assistance from churches abroad in need thereof in accordance with Policies, Protocols and Procedures that it shall from time to time propose to Synod and that Synod shall approve of and ratify. The committee shall keep the churches regularly informed of its work and progress made, and shall publish its reports to synod in the agenda. (This is a modification and expansion of the current CERCU mandate.)

4. **Practices of Sister Churches:** CECCA engaged in extensive research into the practices of our sister Reformed churches on the question of how they handle requests from their needy associated churches abroad. A summary of the results of those contacts appears below. It should be noted that none of the respondents has a comprehensive, institutionalized infrastructure for handling these kinds of needs. Some handle requests on an ad hoc basis occasionally through the offices of single individuals within their organizations. As a result of our inquiries it is clear that there is no currently existing, fully operational infrastructure enacted in another Reformed organization upon which CECCA could model a comprehensive program to respond to assistance requests from abroad. Accordingly, CECCA has determined that the best course of action is to create and submit for synodical approval its own original proposal *ab initio*.
 - a. **RCUS:** The RCUS appears to be the most intentionally organized of the respondents who answered our inquiry. They receive requests at a synodical level through a standing committee. When a request is deemed worthwhile a recipient may receive funds either directly from one of their churches or the synodical treasurer. Procedures for accountability are not clear.
 - b. **CanRef:** The CanRef currently has no structure (i.e. committees or policies) for dealing with matters of this nature. They deal with them on an ad hoc basis. They struggle with having no diaconal arm for handling these kinds of requests.
 - c. **PCA:** The PCA provided us with a document called "Medical Aid and Other Aid to Nationals." This document does not appear to be directly responsive to our inquiry and seems to relate to the process for its missionaries providing help and care to foreign nationals and procedures for reimbursement.
 - d. **OPC:** The OPC has acknowledged our inquiry but has not yet responded substantively.
 - e. **Free Church of Scotland (Continuing):** The FCS (Continuing)'s Ecumenical Relations Committee has no explicit mandate. Their Stated Clerk passes requests to appropriate bodies within the denomination. Any expenditure must be approved by the Finance & Sustention Committee. The Stated Clerk vets and passes requests on (or not) as he deems appropriate.
5. **Sub-Committee Model:** In response to the synodical directive CECCA has now completed its study as to how the URCNA might most effectively support needy churches abroad. CECCA recommends that Synod approve and authorize establishment of a sub-committee within CECCA to receive, evaluate and respond to support requests from needy churches abroad. The name, constituency and authority of the Sub-Committee is proposed as follows;

- a. **Name:** The sub-committee shall be called: CECCA Sub-Committee for Evaluation and Response to Requests for Assistance from Abroad – CECCA-ERRAA.
 - b. **Constituency:** The sub-committee shall consist of 5 members, including at least one URCNA pastor and at least one URCNA elder and a minimum of 3 duly appointed CECCA Classical delegates. Within these guidelines CECCA may appoint members with specialized gifts, talents and experience who may not currently be serving either as pastor or elder but who are members of a URCNA church. It is desirable that at least one member of the sub-committee also be a member of CERCU.
 - c. **Sub-Committee Authority:**
 - i. **Unilateral Authority:** The sub-committee shall have full and unilateral authority to receive, evaluate, meet (if it deems it possible to do so), monitor and effectively administer requests for aid and/or assistance from any church, denomination or federation outside Canada or the United States with which the URCNA has ecumenical relations whether in Phase 1 or Phase 2 up to and including a monetary value of USD \$7,500 and requiring no longer than 14 days to complete.
 - ii. **Advice and Consent of CECCA:** The sub-committee shall receive, evaluate and make recommendation to approve or disapprove all other requests from any church, denomination or federation outside Canada or the United States with which the URCNA has ecumenical relations whether in Phase 1 or Phase 2 to the full CECCA. CECCA shall then approve or disapprove and request and in cases of approval the sub-committee shall then be tasked with meeting, monitoring and effectively administering such requests as have been so approved.
 - iii. **Limitation on Eligible Requests and Coordination With Outside Committees and Organizations:** The sub-committee may consider for unilateral approval only requests coming from churches, denominations or federations outside Canada or the United States with which the URCNA has ecumenical relations whether in Phase 1 or Phase 2. The sub-committee shall maintain contact with other committees and organizations associated with and acting under the authority of other NAPARC member churches and may make, receive, evaluate and submit to CECCA proposals to coordinate with such committees and organizations to provide mutual aid and assistance to assist needy churches abroad.
- 6. Protocols, Procedures and Policies:** The sub-committee shall be authorized to develop the policies, protocols and processes necessary to effectuate its responsibilities as set forth herein and submit them to CECCA for approval. Said policies, protocols and processes shall be amended, supplemented and updated as needed based upon experience and its ongoing activities and shall include but not be limited to:
- a. **Applications:** Establishment of forms for application, procedures for researching and evaluation of requests and approval/disapproval process.
 - b. **Financing:** Arranging means and methods for raising necessary funds and procuring material and human resources.

- c. **Administration:** Defining procedures for administering, monitoring (including travel to on-site locations, if deemed necessary) and ensuring timely completion of authorized projects.
- d. **Coordination:** Creating processes for coordination of its efforts with other URCNA standing committees including in particular the Missions Committee and CERCU.
- e. **Mutual Aid and Assistance:** Determining best practices for seeking and responding to requests for mutual aid and assistance to and from similar committees and organizations under that authority of sister NAPARC churches.
- f. **Evaluation:** Amassing facts and information on all activities so as to permit objective evaluation of results, improvement of policies, protocols and procedures and reporting its activities to successive synods and the URCNA federation at-large.
- g. **Financial Controls:** Putting in place all appropriate budgetary, financial and accounting controls.

Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) Report to Synod Redeemer 2020

I. Introduction

Esteemed Brothers,

Our committee is privileged to serve the churches in our ecumenical opportunities and responsibilities according to the following mandate adopted by Synod Hudsonville 1999: *With a view toward complete church unity, the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity shall pursue and make recommendations regarding the establishment of ecumenical relations with those Reformed and Presbyterian federations selected by synod and in keeping with Article 36 of the Church Order.*

The Committee shall execute its task and carry out its mandate by following synod's Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity. The committee shall keep the churches regularly informed of its work and the progress made, and shall publish its reports to synod in the agenda. (1999 Acts, pages 17 & 49)

From our early beginnings as a federation, the pursuit of genuine biblical and confessional ecumenicity has formed a prominent component of our identity as churches. The desire for such growing expressions of unity was expressed already from the outset, with the choosing of our name – United Reformed. For the past two and a half decades, we have been richly blessed (and have been of blessing) through our contact and growing fellowship with many confessionally faithful Reformed bodies that share with us like and precious faith.

Our committee is committed to work according to the mandate we have received from the churches, that we work “with a view toward complete church unity” (CERCU mandate). We believe that in principle, if not always in practice, there is a large degree of unanimity amongst us as URCNA churches on this. We are also humbly aware, though that for a variety of reasons, such complete unity will not always be attained

By the grace of God, we are a federation of churches that is known for its strong commitment to the absolute authority of the Word of God as faithfully summarized by our Three Forms of Unity. Any pursuit of unity that would stand opposed to this commitment to the truth should be summarily rejected. Many of us can speak from painful experience of the damages that have been done when unity was promoted at the expense of truth. The unity our Savior envisions and prays for is a unity that must be governed by the truth – His Word is truth (John 17:14,17).

We also humbly recognize from the prayer of our Savior regarding all that the Father has given Him, that the unity He prays and works for is a blessing that must be given by the gracious work of His Spirit. Only with His blessing, therefore will organic unity ever come to expression among the churches. Unity cannot be forced or manufactured. Prayerfully and patiently recognizing that, we nevertheless also understand from our Savior that greater unity among all those who've been given to Christ remains a goal patiently to be pursued. Jesus prays and works for greater expressions of unity, in order that the world may know that the Father has sent Him (John 17:21,24).

For the sake of our witness, therefore, we continue to count it a privilege patiently to pray and work for greater expressions of unity. We rejoice that we experience God's blessing as our ecumenical calling serves our missionary calling and vice versa. Through ecumenical relations we've learned more about missions, we've been given more opportunities for missions, and have found help and encouragement from those who've been able to come alongside of us in our mission. Opportunities seized to work together have enhanced our witness to the world.

The question remains, does such blessing require organizational unity? Perhaps not always. But certainly, the unity we enjoy in the truth within our own federation bears witness to our conviction that where such organizational expression of unity is possible, it is a good thing. Jesus prays to the end that our spiritual unity is manifested (see also Foundational Principles of Church Government, number 10). We take organizational unity to be *an* application, a helpful way of bringing the unity Jesus prayed for to expression. We recognize that it would not be proper to assert that this is *the* application, or the only way of bringing this unity to expression. But if, by the grace of God, greater organizational unity can be safely and wisely attained, we believe it does serve the well-being of the church and enhances her mission (Foundational Principle 7).

To one degree or another, greater unity is always something of a goal in all our relationships. As long as we remain on this side of Christ's return, we will not have "arrived", we ought to continue to pray and work for greater expressions of unity. How such blessing gets worked out practically in each situation is a matter for which we as churches together will continue to need the peaceable and pure wisdom that is from above. In God's good providence, and by our decisions as churches, moving relations forward with any particular body requires a high degree of unanimity among our own churches. We believe this is wise.

We seek to carry out this important work joyfully according to the following synodical guidelines.

GUIDELINES FOR ECUMENICITY AND CHURCH UNITY United Reformed Churches in North America

Phase One - Corresponding Relations

The first phase of ecumenicity is one of exploration, with the intent that by correspondence and dialogue, mutual understanding and appreciation may develop in the following areas of the two federations' lives:

- a. view and place of the Holy Scriptures
- b. creeds and confessions
- c. formula of subscription to the confessions
- d. significant factors in the two federations' history, theology, and ecclesiology
- e. church order and polity
- f. liturgy and liturgical forms
- g. preaching, sacraments, and discipline
- h. theological education for ministers

Ecumenical observers are to be invited to all broader assemblies with a regular exchange of the minutes of these assemblies and of other publications that may facilitate ecumenical relations.

Phase Two - Ecclesiastical Fellowship

The second phase of ecumenicity is one of recognition and is entered into only when the broadest assemblies of both federations agree this is desirable. The intent of this phase is to recognize and accept each other as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus, and in acknowledgment of the desirability of eventual integrated federative church unity, by establishing ecclesiastical fellowship entailing the following:

- a. the churches shall assist each other as much as possible in the maintenance, defense, and promotion of Reformed doctrine, liturgy, church polity, and discipline
- b. the churches shall consult each other when entering into ecumenical relations with other federations
- c. c. the churches shall accept each other's certificates of membership, admitting such members to the Lord's Table
- d. d. the churches shall open the pulpits to each other's ministers, observing the rules of the respective churches
- e. e. the churches shall consult each other before major changes to the confessions, church government, or liturgy are adopted
- f. f. the churches shall invite and receive each other's ecclesiastical delegates who shall participate in the broader assemblies with an advisory voice

Entering this phase requires ratification by a majority of the consistories as required in Church Order, Art.36.

Phase Three - Church Union

The third phase of ecumenicity is one of integration with the intent that the two federations, being united in true faith, and where contiguous geography permits, shall proceed to complete church unity, that is, ecclesiastical union. This phase shall be accomplished in two steps:

Step A – Development of the Plan of Ecclesiastical Union Having recognized and accepted each other as true and faithful churches, the federations shall make preparation for and a commitment to eventual, integrated federative church unity. They shall construct a plan of ecclesiastical union which shall outline the timing, coordination, and/or integration of the following:

- a. the broader assemblies
- b. the liturgies and liturgical forms
- c. the translations of the Bible and the confessions
- d. the song books for worship
- e. the church polity and order
- f. the missions abroad

Entering this step of Phase Three requires ratification by the consistories as required in Church Order, Art. 36.

Step B – Implementation of the Plan of Ecclesiastical Union

This final step shall only be taken when the broadest assemblies of both federations give their endorsement and approval to a plan of ecclesiastical union. Entering this step of Phase Three requires ratification by a majority of the consistories as required in Church Order, Art. 36.

II. Committee Membership and Terms, Budget, and Policy

a. Committee membership and Terms

The classes are reminded of their continuing responsibility to appoint or reappoint classical representatives (and alternates) to CERCU in the manner the classes deem appropriate.

The committee is currently comprised of three members-at-large and eight classical representatives, one per classis. Rev. Todd De Rooy has taken over as chairman after Rev. Bouwers faithfully served in that role for many years. Rev. Steve Swets continues to be the secretary of CERCU. The members are as follows:

Classical representatives:

| Classis | Delegate | Alternate |
|----------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Central United States | Rev. Todd De Rooy | Rev. Joel Vander Kooi |
| 2. Eastern United States | Rev. Calvin Tuininga | Rev. Kevin Hossink |
| 3. Michigan | Rev. Casey Freswick | Rev. Matthew Nuiver |
| 4. Ontario East | Rev. John Bouwers | Rev. Martin Overgaauw |
| 5. Pacific Northwest | Mr. Doug Field | Rev. Craig Davis |
| 6. Southwest United States | Rev. Brad Lenzner | Rev. Movses Janbazian |
| 7. Southwestern Ontario | Rev. Daniel Ventura | Mr. Harry Van Gurp |
| 8. Western Canada | Rev. Ralph Pontier | Rev. Lou Slagter |
| Member-at-large | | |
| 9. Rev. William Boekestein | Term ends July 1, 2022 | |
| 10. Rev. Richard Miller | Term ends July 1, 2022 | |
| 11. Rev. Steve Swets | Term ends July 1, 2020 (CERCU requests re-appointment) | |

Alternates have been apprised of all committee discussions and have, on occasion represented the churches in place of the primary delegate.

b. Budget

We are asking that the annual budget for CERCU be changed from \$10,000 to \$12,500. The annual meeting of NAPARC each year is the primary place that CERCU meets and that is where the majority of our budget is spent. As a committee, we see the need to continue to have at least one face to face meeting each year. The importance of classical representation necessitates our being a large committee. It is also important to travel for the synods/GA's of other churches to continue our encouragement in unity. This past year, CERCU went over budget by \$1,100. The adjustment should be sufficient to address these needs.

c. Handbook

As a committee, we have found it helpful to adopt policy guidelines to assist those who are delegated as fraternal delegates to synods, working as a CERCU subcommittee, etc. When a new member comes onto our committee, there is a steep learning curve to get that brother caught up on what takes place annually. A policy handbook is designed to help. This Handbook was included in the CERCU report given to synod Wheaton 2018.

III. Reports on Churches in Ecumenical Relations

Your committee counts it a privilege to engage in ecumenical dialogue and seeks to promote greater unity among 12 synodically approved bodies of churches in North America. They, along with our respective phase of relations with them, are as follows:

Churches in Phase One – Corresponding Relations

1. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)
2. Free Reformed Churches (FRC)
3. Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC)
4. Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC)
5. Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin (KPCA)
6. Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)
7. Presbyterian Reformed Church

Churches in Phase Two – Ecclesiastical Fellowship

1. Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)
2. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)
3. Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)
4. Reformed Church of Quebec / L’Eglise Reformee du Quebec (ERQ)
5. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)

At Synod Wyoming 2016 CERCU proposed “Guidelines for speeches of fraternal observers and delegates to our Synod” (Article 20.10 of the *Acts of Synod*) which was approved and immediately implemented. Those guidelines served us well in 2016 and 2018 as we trust it will in 2020 and going forward.

A. Churches in Phase One- *Corresponding Relations*

1. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)

The ARP was founded in Philadelphia in 1782. It was a combination of the American portions of two Scottish presbyteries that had previously left the Church of Scotland: The Associate Presbytery began in 1733 and the Reformed Presbytery in 1743. It owns Erskine College and Seminary. The churches no longer are required to practice exclusive psalmody, which was its heritage. In the last quarter of the 20th century, they threw off the influence of neo-orthodoxy, which reached the height of its influence among them in the 1960’s.

As of November 2019, the ARP had 10 presbyteries with a total number of organized and unorganized churches at 277. Their total membership was 31,790. The ARPC and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) have been in a process of growing closer to each other as denominations. They have expressed this in more urgent unity meetings, joint General Assemblies at Bonclarken, Flat Rock, NC, among other activities.

The ARPC holds to the Westminster Confession of Faith as well as Larger and Shorter Catechisms. They also hold to their Form of Government, Directory of Public Worship, and Book of Discipline. They are members of NAPARC and the World Reformed Fellowship. They were also at one-time members of the ICRC, but have reported that stewardship considerations have compelled them to withdraw from that arrangement for a time.

Our meetings with this body have been intermittent. As the Lord allows, our intentions are that over the next years we will be able to continue to pursue the Phase 1 dialogue with this body that we trust will one day allow for a recommendation to our churches that we move to a Phase Two relationship. Congregations and classes are urged to pursue opportunities for ecumenical fellowship with ARP congregations and Presbyteries.

2. Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRC)

The Free Reformed Churches were established in 1921. As of November 2019, they had a total of 21 congregations with a total membership of 5,222. They hold to the Three Forms of Unity. Their churches are scattered across North America, mainly in Canada. The FRC trace their roots to the secession that occurred in the established Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands in 1834. The FRC are the spiritual descendants of the churches in the Netherlands which did not join in the merger of 1892, which formed the GKN. They were then, and are today, particularly concerned about the influence of Abraham Kuyper, most specifically in relation to his view of presumptive regeneration in connection with baptism. Although they trace their roots to the Netherlands, they greatly value and appreciate the theology and preaching of the English and Scottish Puritans and those who followed in their footsteps especially the experimental and discriminating character of Puritan preaching, their emphasis on the need for conversion, cultivating a close personal walk with the Lord and eschewing worldliness. They work closely with the Heritage Reformed Churches in the operation of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

A number of our own URC churches have developed very good working relationships with FRC congregations through connections through Christian schooling, conferences and ministries to migrant workers, as well as through mutual involvement with Word and Deed and in Redemption Prison Ministries.

Since our last synod we have had the opportunity to meet with the FRC twice in Hamilton, ON. In 2019, our meeting with them involved one representative from the Heritage Reformed Congregations. This has become an annual meeting each February where we have discussed each other's preaching, history, emphases, and ecumenicity. It is clear in these meetings that we are coming from two slightly different traditions, however, through our discussions, we are growing to greater appreciate and understand each other on these issues.

In February 2020, subcommittees from each federation met and went over the 8 topics listed under the mandate for CERCU regarding Phase One relationships. This was a helpful opportunity to understand each other better.

We have encouraged the FRC in their relationship with the HRC. As a committee we would like to see them merge in order to show a greater unity. They have encouraged us in the same vein regarding our relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

We continue to make our way through the Phase One dialogue with the hope that we may, in time, be able to recommend moving to a Phase Two relationship with these churches as well.

3. Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC)

The HRC was established in 1993. Their synod meets annually with each of their 9 congregations sending a delegation. They hold to both the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster standards. They operate the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, which has an enrolment of about 150 students from 20 different countries and 30 denominations.

We have continued bilateral meetings with the representatives of the HRC at NAPARC in every year. The meetings were positive and encouraging.

The HRC has five levels of fellowship, which are as follows:

- Level 1: Informal Contact
- Level 2: Formal Correspondence
- Level 3: Limited Fellowship
- Level 4: Full Fellowship
- Level 5: Full Union

In 2013 the HRC voted to enter into their Level 2 with us which corresponds with our Phase One. As these discussions continue under the blessing of God, perhaps in time further progress into a preliminary level of fellowship may be possible, approaching a Phase Two relationship (in URCNA categories). We have met with their representatives at NAPARC the last 6 years and have continued to hold before them our desire to work through the prescribed topics for discussion in Phase One with the hope of our being able to move into a Phase Two relationship with them in the Lord's good time. We have enjoyed a growing good will through meeting with these brothers. We have eagerly encouraged them in their growing relationship with the Free Reformed Churches.

In February 2020, we met for the first time as CERCU with the HRC outside of the regular meeting at NAPARC. This meeting was fruitful. The HRC intends to recommend to their upcoming Synod a move to their Level 3, Limited Fellowship with the URCNA. This approximates our own Phase 2, Ecclesiastical Fellowship relationship. We intend to continue

dialogue with the HRC brethren at a subcommittee level and look forward to bringing a recommendation to our Synod 2022 enter a Phase 2 relationship with the HRC.

4. Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC)

The KAPC was established in 1978. They are a primarily Korean speaking church which makes a pursuit of fuller union with them complicated. Their membership has risen since our last report. As of November 2019, they have 80,000 members in 650 congregations over 30 presbyteries. Most of their growth has taken place due to immigration to America. Their churches are located primarily in large urban centers. They hold a General Assembly annually.

We look forward to continuing the process of getting to know each other, but for the foreseeable future, we do not anticipate growing much closer with the KAPC until their church becomes more thoroughly English speaking.

5. Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin (KPCA)

The KPCA was established in 1985 and as of November 2017 they have 6,200 members over 149 churches. They have active mission fields in many countries where Korean have immigrated.

We have not had any direct contact or meetings with the KPCA except for informal contact at NAPARC. This is a denomination which is even more connected to Korea than the KAPC. Their services are in Korean and they foresee this as a potential hurdle in the future as the next generation seeks English speaking churches.

6. Presbyterian Church in America

The PCA was established in 1973 as a break off of the PCUSA over the issue of the inerrancy of scripture. It is the largest members church of NAPARC. As of November 2017, the PCA had 384,793 members over 1,927 churches/mission works. They hold to the Westminster standards. In addition to NAPARC, they are members of the National Association of Evangelicals and the World Reformed Fellowship.

The PCA has two levels of ecclesiastical relationships. They designate their entry level of relations as Corresponding Relations. Fraternal Relations is the more intense level of relations, one which they have with all NAPARC denominations or federations by virtue of membership in NAPARC. This means that short of the pursuit of a merger, from the perspective of the PCA we are already in their highest level of relations. The PCA, though certainly open to greater, more complete unity with other bodies, has not been actively involved in pursuing it at NAPARC.

In 2019 we sent a representative of CERCU to the GA of the PCA. The GA is so large and fraternal delegates are such a small part of it, there was a question of how effective such a pursuit of attending their GA actually was. It was decided by CERCU to likely not send another delegate soon to this GA.

There appears to be some growing tension among NAPARC churches with the PCA. This has come out at the last couple of meeting of NAPARC. Unfortunately, the PCA ordinarily only sends one or two delegates, some of which are not very versed on the workings of NAPARC or what is living among PCA congregations. We did not meet with them at NAPARC in 2019.

We encourage local churches to seek greater dialogue with their local PCA congregations.

7. Presbyterian Reformed Church

The PRC is the smallest group in NAPARC. It is an indigenous North American group of churches continuing historic Scottish Presbyterian orthodoxy in doctrine, worship, government and discipline, on the basis of a conviction that these principles and practices are founded upon and agreeable to the Word of God. It consists of four congregations in the US (Des Moines, IA, Columbus, IN, Charlotte, NC, and East Greenwich, RI), one in Chesley, Ontario and one in England. They have a total of 184 members in the six congregations. They are committed to a strict adherence to “The Directory for the Publick Worship Of God” (1645) and exclusive psalmody. All of their churches have ministers but most of their ministers are bi-vocational since their congregations are small and unable to fully support their pastors financially.

Although they are committed to organic union with like minded churches, because of geography and their strict adherence to “The Directory for the Publick Worship Of God” (1645), including exclusive psalmody, we have not yet pursued a Phase One dialogue with this group. We will continue informal contacts at NAPARC and we urge classes and congregations to pursue local contact where it is available to gain greater awareness and familiarity.

B. Churches in Phase Two-*Ecclesiastical Fellowship*

1. Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)

We have been in a Phase Two – *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches since the ratification of the decision of Synod Escondido 2001. We thank God for this relationship and believe the Lord continues to use it for much mutual blessing between the churches of our respective federations.

As of November 2019, the CanRC consisted of 70 congregations (including foreign and domestic mission works not yet organized) and 19,319 members, and 8 classes.

At Synod Wyoming 2016, CERCU informed synod that they would not propose to move to Phase 3A for at least 6 years. This would bring 2022 as the first potential year for such a movement. This recommendation from CERCU was given because not all of our churches are comfortable or desirous of moving ahead at this time with the Canadian Reformed. Though this decision has been perceived as regrettable from the perspective of the former CCU (Coordinators for Church Unity) of the CanRC, which were appointed to deal only with the URC; what this has done, positively, is that it has taken off any pressure that a potential and imminent merger seemed to be causing in some of our churches.

As a result of CERCU's commitment to Synod 2016, the CanRC at their Synod Edmonton 2019 decided to disband their CCU dealing with the URC. Therefore, this year was the first year that we have met with the full delegations of the CanRC unity committee, the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA). From their perspective, this meeting involved a fair bit of getting up to speed in terms of where our discussions have gone in the last number of years. Much of the discussion revolved around ideas expressed at a public discussion between a CanRC minister and a URC minister (see note below).

This was a fruitful meeting with their members. A great appreciation was shown from both sides, though it was clear that there continue to be obstacles which have to be overcome if full organic unity were ever to occur.

In May 2019, a combined meeting of URC and CanRC officebearers from throughout the Niagara peninsula met in Dunnville, ON. At this well attended event, two presenters spoke about the past, present and the future of the relationship between the URC and the CanRC. Rev. John Bouwers spoke on behalf of the URC and Rev. Willem Den Hollander spoke on behalf of the CanRC (see Rev. Bouwers' speech appended to this report). Among other ideas for ways forward that were suggested in this speech, one was whether a potential merger could be considered on the basis of the URCNA Church Order. This was something we had discussed previously as CERCU, agreeing it could potentially be a "game changer" in terms of an impasse we have been experiencing on the matter of church polity. . This provocative idea was then floated at our meeting with the new CanRC CCCNA committee at NAPARC in November of 2019, and it seemed to catch them off guard. Future discussion will continue.

Where we stand now, after nearly 20 years of this discussion, is side by side with brothers and sisters in Christ. In many places in our federation where there is close interaction and fellowship, there continues to be a growing desire to move our federations together. Since this has not yet happened, this reality can be frustrating at times. It continues to lend itself to an "us" vs. "them" feeling. Some in the CanRC camp wonder why the URC would not want to merge our federations together at this time. It is difficult for us to pinpoint specific issues that would be "deal breakers" for unity. The differences and preferences that remain among our federations seem like they could be resolved if both sides are willing to listen. If a Church Order could be agreed upon, could we then have unity? Might the CanRC be more willing to adopt a Church Order closer to our's than the URC is willing to adopt a Church Order closer to theirs? Finding a way to work this out profitably is what we hope to continue to discuss. These are some of the matters CERCU has dealt with on this subject.

To be frank, we as a committee recognize that as a committee of the federation we are directed by the federation. Our mandate makes clear that the goal of our ecumenical pursuits is "complete church unity." Though ecumenicity is hard work, it should be that which brings us together as true churches of Jesus Christ. It therefore grieves us that our growing unity with the CanRC has been, at times, divisive among our congregations.

CERCU would be pleased to receive letters from consistories on the subject of our relationship with the CanRC. We would like to hear what the fears, drawbacks, hurdles, and challenges to

unity would be. These letters can be sent to our secretary Rev. Steve Swets (sswets@gmail.com) or our chairman Rev. Todd De Rooy (pastorderooy@gmail.com).

Where proximity has afforded a blessed relationship, we see this continue to grow and develop. Where distance or brokenness has not produced this blessing, we pray for healing, understanding, and growth. May God be pleased and glorified as we seek to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” Eph. 4:3.

2. Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)

The RCUS was established in 1746 by German immigrants. As of November 2019, the RCUS had a membership of 3,634 over 48 churches and mission works. Membership in the RCUS has been experiencing a slow decline.

In many places where there are both RCUS congregations and URC’s side by side there is a good and mutual opportunity to serve together. We have enjoyed a Phase Two relationship with the RCUS since Synod Calgary 2004. The RCUS are a faithful federation which holds to the Three Forms of Unity.

We met with the RCUS at NAPARC this past year. The RCUS seems content to keep things the way that they are at this point. Though we have noticed over the last number of years that the RCUS is spending more time looking forward to what the future might bring to them as a denomination of churches.

We encourage those classes and congregations in geographic proximity with RCUS classes and congregations to continue to promote and enhance the unity of faith we enjoy with this body through the exchange of fraternal delegates at broader assemblies, and in local engagement and encouragement of combined activities with RCUS churches as the Lord allows.

3. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

The OPC is a denomination which began as a stand against liberalism and modernism in the PCUSA in the 1930’s. The OPC was established in 1936 and now their membership is 31,043 members among 324 churches and mission works. The OPC has a strong emphasis upon missions in the world. We as a federation view them as something of an older sister who continues to teach us many valuable lessons.

We are in Phase Two *Ecumenical Fellowship* with the OPC since Synod Schererville 2007. Our relationship with the OPC has continued to grow. We have been tremendously blessed by their efforts in church planting. As time goes on, the URC puts into practice many of the policies that are bearing much fruit in the OPC (e.g. a church planting manual, a full-time missions coordinator).

We met with the OPC again this year at NAPARC. From our demeanor and discussion with each other it is clear that we feel very comfortable with each other. Much of our discussion with the

OPC centered upon missions and hardships and struggles with ministerial burnout. Both of our federations lost a minister to suicide during the past year. With thankfulness it is noted that Rev. James Folkerts and his family have begun their work in Uganda. Rev. Folkerts last served the Telkwa URC and the URC still holds his ministerial credentials. It is a blessing to work together on this mission field.

We look forward to more fruit upon our ecumenical efforts with the OPC in the days to come. To that end we heartily encourage classes and congregations in geographic proximity with OPC presbyteries and congregations to continue the exchange of fraternal delegates, and to engage in other ecumenical activities that may be available. One such effort was the publication of a book recently entitled *Faithful and Fruitful* which contains essays from the pastors and professors in the URC, OPC, CanRC, and PCA. CERCU is grateful for such efforts as these and encourages other classes and congregations to take advantage of such opportunities for enjoying and advancing our ecumenical fellowship together.

4. Reformed Church of Quebec / L’Eglise reformee du Quebec (ERQ)

The Reformed Church of Quebec is the smallest denomination with which we have a Phase Two *Ecclesiastical Fellowship*. They have a membership of around 370 among five congregations. The ERQ was established in 1988 and it is the only Reformed denomination in the province of Quebec. All of their churches are French speaking.

The ERQ over the last number of years have been busy in translating solid English books into French. We have had the privilege of hearing about this work each year at NAPARC. The ERQ is very eager to receive help from our churches and we encourage this. They continue to be in prayer for French speaking pastors. Nevertheless, many opportunities exist for more mission works of URC members who are not ordained. Quebec is a spiritually dark province of Canada, but the Lord certainly has His church there and we can see that with the ERQ.

5. Reformed Presbyterian Church in North American (RPCNA)

The RPCNA has its roots in Scottish Presbyterianism. It was organized in North America in 1798. As over November 2019, the RPCNA had 7,440 members over 104 churches and mission works. They operate a theological school, the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, established in 1810. The seminary is committed to the inerrancy of Scripture and to the Reformed Faith as summarized in the Westminster Standards and in the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Their worship is characterized by exclusive psalmody and singing without musical accompaniment. The RPCNA owns and operates a liberal arts college, Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, which is now 171 years old.

We are in their Level 2 *Fraternal Relations* category. Their category 1, a higher level, which is full intercommunion is made up of three denominations overseas.

The RPCNA continues to discuss greater unity with the ARPC, which we encouraged. Exclusive Psalmody with no instrumentation seems to be the biggest hurdle in that process between those denominations. This past year they held a combined synod with the ARP. Part of the preparation

for the meeting was to have a debate over this subject. This was the first time the ARP did not meet in Bonclarken, N.C. in a long time. The meeting was held at Geneva College and seemed to have been well received. One highlight of the meeting was the opportunity to hear about each other's boards and ministries taking place.

CERCU met again with the RPCNA at NAPARC. They informed us that there is discussion of the RPCNA in Canada of starting their own denomination. This is of interest to us as a multi-national federation. Many places in North America where churches are in close proximity, there is a good and healthy relationship. We encourage congregations and classes to continue this process of unity on a grassroots level.

C. North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)

The 45th meeting of NAPARC took place at Rotherm Presbyterian Church (KPCA) in Anaheim, California. Dr. Curto of the OPC was the chairman of the meeting and Rev. Ralph Pontier is the secretary for NAPARC. NAPARC consists of 13-member churches, all of which we are in a Phase One or Two relationship with us.

The basis of NAPARC's fellowship is "Confessing Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Sovereign Lord over all of life, we affirm the basis of the fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches to be full commitment to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God written, without error in all its parts, and to its teaching as set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms." (NAPARC Constitution)

A large portion of the meeting is hearing reports from each of the member churches, after which there is an opportunity for questions. It is good to hear updates of each of the churches.

The discussion revealed different ideas about the importance and feasibility of organic (organizational) union, but also a common commitment to giving visible expression to that unity which is already ours in Christ. The discussion was helpful in reminding delegates of the two-fold purpose of NAPARC, but also of its limitations. NAPARC continues to provide a venue for its member churches to talk with one another corporately and bilaterally, and to hold out before each other the ecumenical imperative of Scripture. It has strengthened fraternal bonds and spurred greater cooperation in missions, diaconal services, theological education, and youth ministry.

As CERCU, we use the opportunity of NAPARC to meet in bi-lateral meeting with 5-7 other denominations. This year we met with the OPC, RPCNA, PRCA, HRC, CanRC, and RCUS. These meetings were all fruitful and encouraging

Over the last number of years, the Protestant Reformed Church has sent observers to NAPARC, though they are not ready to yet join NAPARC.

NAPARC continues to be a blessing to attend their meetings. For the most part, there is a growing desire to continue to pursue the Lord's glory in the area of ecumenicity.

D. Contact with other North American Churches

We recognize at CERCU that our ecumenical efforts are to be primarily with those churches we have unity together with in NAPARC. Nevertheless, there are two additional denominations which we have had conversation with over the past two years.

In December 2018, we received a communication from the CRC Executive Director inquiring if we would be willing to have an informal discussion. This arose after their synod in 2018 identified a need to seek reconciliation with those from the past. This introductory letter was simply testing the waters to see what way we could even have this discussion as churches.

After consulting with the convening consistory of Synod 2020, we responded to this letter with thankfulness for their reaching out to us. We told them we would only be interested discussing and dealing with the real issues that had divided us in the past. We are not interested in a generic reconciliation that doesn't deal with the theological matters at hand.

They responded and recognized the difficulty of this conversation. They are not interested in dealing with the theological issues of the past, rather they explain that "churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately" (the Lund principle). In short, they want to explore ways to ease some of the pain of the past and express our "Christian unity in a world and culture deeply scarred by sin and profoundly in need of the redeeming grace of our Savior."

At the date of this writing, Classis Central US will be receiving an overture to enter into ecumenical relations with Classis Minnkota of the CRC according to Church Order Article 35. This is a theologically "conservative" classis of the CRC. They send delegates to synod in protest of female delegation. It is within the bounds of our church order that Classis Central US may proceed with this dialogue of ecumenicity. Of interest, Classis Minnkota of the CRC did ask to join NAPARC, but the constitution of NAPARC only permits denominations as a whole to join.

The second federation we have corresponded with has been the Protestant Reformed. The PRCA began in 1924 over the debate regarding Common Grace and Rev. Herman Hoeksema's deposition from the CRC. The PRCA is made up of just over 30 churches and 7,000 members. Over the last number of years, the PRCA has been sending observers to NAPARC. Though in 2018, the PRCA decided at their synod that they are not yet prepared to join NAPARC, they continue to send observers. As time goes on, there is more interaction with the PRCA and the URC, primarily in Michigan where the majority of their churches are located.

In October 2019, a subcommittee of CERCU met at the Protestant Reformed Seminary in Grandville, MI. The primary focus of the discussion surrounded the URC Doctrinal Statement on Federal Vision. Though we may disagree as to the root cause of the Federal Vision error, great appreciation was voiced for our statement, and a fruitful discussion took place.

Though theology, history, and ethos distinguish the PRC from us, a common confession, mother church, and love for the Reformed faith bring us together. May God bless these efforts to understand and encourage each other.

IV. Recommendations

1. That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to the committee chairman and secretary when committee matters are being considered (Regulations 5.4.2)
2. That Synod re-appoint as a member-at-large Rev. Steve Swets to a third three-year term to commence on July 1, 2020. (Rev. Swets was first appointed by Synod 2014 to a term beginning July 1, 2014. He is eligible for re-appointment. Regulations 5.3.2.c.)
3. That Synod remind the churches of our mutual responsibility to engage one another in our ecumenical task through prayer, classical dialogue, local efforts and expression of concerns.
4. That synod remind the churches what was adopted at Synod Wyoming 2016: “That synod urges the churches to make a regular part of the information they publish in weekly bulletins, church newsletters, church web-sites and other informational publications, our federation’s membership in NAPARC and the ICRC, providing web addresses for each to encourage our members to learn about these ecumenical organizations and to help foster an awareness of the biblical ecumenical mandate to seek ever greater unity with those of like faith and practice. Just as the local church makes known its affiliation with the federation, so it should make known the federation’s fraternal bonds.”
5. That synod approve the budget of \$12,500 USD per annum.
6. That the classes be commended for their faithfulness in appointing or reappointing classical representatives (and alternates) to CERCU in the manner the classes deem appropriate.
7. That Synod approve the work of the committee without adopting every formulation in its various dialogues.

Humbly Submitted,
Rev. Todd De Rooy, chairman
Rev. Steven A. Swets, secretary

Appendix 1:
Speech by Rev. John A Bouwers on a Unity Meeting with the CanRC on May 9, 2019 in
Dunnville, Ontario

**Unity Meeting – Grace Reformed Church, Dunnville
May 9, 2019**

Dear brothers,

Thank you for the kind introduction, thank you for the gracious invitation, thank you for your continued interest in and concern for the pursuit of godly, biblical, confessional unity among those who share a common confessional heritage, who are united by God's grace with like and precious faith.

As many of you will know, this is a pursuit that has been, and remains near and dear to my heart, one that I have had the privilege by God's grace of being engaged in for over 20 years. Indeed, it was more than 20 years ago that brother den Hollander and I sat across the table coming to know, appreciate and love one another, as we sought to labour to understand the challenges and to lay the groundwork for the process of unity our federations of churches would come to commit themselves to. (Richard Stienstra, Peter Vellenga, Harry Zekveld, the late Dr. J. De Jong, along with Elders Vander Velde and Westrik).

And here we are today, perhaps asking ourselves, what do we have to show for it? Over 20 years has proved to be a very long courtship. Now, the courtship analogy has its usefulness as well as its limitations, but if we would stick with it for a moment, 20 years is a long time for our love to go unrequited, for our union to remain unconsummated. Remember I did say the courtship analogy has its limitations. So, let's leave that there.

So, have we become tired, jaded, frustrated, disappointed, or even, as is the case for some, completely apathetic? Have we effectively given up? What's the point? That may well be the sense of some, you do hear talk to that effect – we aren't making progress, we're going backwards!

But brothers I am here to assert to you tonight that I do not share that conviction, not at all!

No, we are not yet where we *want* to be, perhaps not where we *could* be, and probably not even where we *should* be, but brothers, let's keep our eyes open to the fact that we are light years ahead of where we once were! That's the work of God's grace! That's worth *celebrating*, *enjoying* and *working with* as we press on together. (Cf. Philippians 3:12f).

Where have we come from, where are, where are we headed?

I. Past – *hesitant, principled and hopeful*

I pondered for a while as to where we should begin when speaking of the past. Adam and Eve might be a good place, after all, that's where our Catechism says the church began in Lord's Day 21. It's also where *sin* entered the picture. No doubt *that's* significant for our discussions and challenges.

We might perhaps skip over all of the history we can likely all agree on – the Reformation 1517, the Synod of Dort 1618-19, the Afscheiding 1834 and the Doleantie 1886. Then, of course there's the Liberation of 1944. What do you do with that? Well, we could potentially get stuck there. Certainly, if you would consider the family histories of many of us you could say, we went our separate ways there. There was bad blood there. In our desire to honour God, sin was not lacking. Some people still harbour suspicion. But, in some ways, with the secessions from the CRC of the early 1990s, some of us could begin to relate in new ways to the experiences of

those who went through the Liberation. We could perhaps find each other in terms of what we were *against*: that is, we were against going beyond the confessions and we were against hierarchicalism. Thankfully, it almost immediately came to be appreciated, however, that the way forward was not: what do you think of what happened in 1944, but, do you stand wholeheartedly with the Bible as we confess it in our Three Forms of Unity? Not what are you against, but what are you for?

An important event took place at Redeemer College in the fall of 1992. It was a commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Union of 1892, an important union of Reformed Churches that took place in the Netherlands. The 1992 meetings at Redeemer took place over several evenings. Notable speakers were such men as Dr. Jelle Faber and Dr. Cornel Venema, as well as Dr. Theodore Plantinga. Two of these brothers have since gone home to be with the Lord and, at that time, two of them were still serving in the CRC. Dr. C. Van Dam edited an important book that has chronicled those evenings for posterity. It's called "The Challenge of Church Union." It was a heady and exciting time, especially for those of us who had only recently seceded from the CRC. The hopes of many were that the Union of 1892 provided the pattern for a potential new union 100 years later. If the churches of the Afscheiding of 1834 could come together with the churches of the Doleantie of 1886 in the space of a mere 6 years in 1892, wouldn't it be wonderful if the churches of the secessions of the early 90s could find also their way into a union with the churches that were 'liberated' about 50 years earlier? Six years would have put us at about 1998. Now, that didn't happen. And 20-20 hindsight tells us those hopes were naïve. If the Union of 1892 was the "miracle of the 19th century," as it has been called, might it have been presumptuous to suppose God would grant the exact same blessing 100 years later? Might we also have been in error in assuming that a *pattern* from one context should *necessarily* serve as a *prescription* in a different context?

Here's a lesson I've come to the conviction we would do well to continue to learn: Historical precedent and Biblical principle are not the same thing. An historical precedent may have been a good application of a Biblical principle in its time, but that's not *necessarily* to say that the precedent is itself the Biblical principle.

Healthy discussions ensued, however, throughout the 1990s. Of course, there was *hesitation*. Among the Canadian Reformed, having lived a fairly isolated existence, there were many who struggled: what are we to do with this "new kid on the ecclesiastical block?" "Is it right for us to talk to them?" "Should we wait for synod to instruct us?" "Can we call them a true church?" "Is that our place?"

Hesitation.

And, in turn, from the 1990s secession churches' perspective, *that* hesitation was met with our own hesitation. Memories, caricatures, hurts, some perceived, some real.

There was something of an impasse that I would describe like this: – the approach of the Canadian Reformed, tightly knit in their federative bond, were generally of this mind: – "hey, why don't we become one so we can get to know each other?" The approach of what would later become the URC was just the opposite, coming from the experience of recently being

loosed from a more hierarchical bond going in an unbiblical direction, they would have put it this way: “Let’s get to know each other so that one day we might be one.”

Long story short, that impasse was overcome when our respective Synods (Neerlandia and Escondido) entered into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase 2) in 2001. At our respective synods we formally and officially recognized each other as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. Unity Committees were established (Church Order, Songbook and Theological Education), and the hope was actually expressed that the work could be done, and a plan of union could perhaps begin to go into effect as early as 2004. Again, naïve, perhaps. But principled and hopeful.

It should be noted that, reflective of our different approaches, at the URC Synod Escondido 2001 the decision to enter Phase 2 was near unanimous, but the decision to establish the unity committees was just over 66%. This was an indication that many in the URC at that time were alright with expressing a broad form of unity, but not as keen to go all the way to full union. It’s also worthy of note that at that URC Synod concerns were raised about Canadian Reformed teaching on the covenant that anticipated the Federal Vision controversy. These concerns were answered and addressed, and the churches proceeded into Phase 2, but among some what would become the Federal Vision concern did linger for many years.

Nevertheless, what needs to be appreciated, is that the decisions of our respective 2001 Synods are what have opened the door and given us the platform or arena with which our growing unity could begin to flourish.

II. Present – *practical, honest, halting and hopeful (less hopeful, not to say hopeless)*

At present, the relationship is, I would say, very good. Whenever and wherever persistent interaction has been pursued, appreciation, love and trust have grown. Preaching on each other’s pulpits has been well received. Differences of emphases are discernible, but many times those differences have been appreciated, helpful and complementary. I would also say that, no doubt because of our relationship, those differences are diminishing to some degree. The general conviction remains that we recognize in one another’s preaching a common commitment to our Biblical, Reformed and Confessional heritage.

We enjoy increased cooperation in such things as education, evangelism, youth activities, conferences, joint services, and pulpit exchanges. Vacant churches have made mutual use of the pastors of our respective federations to great blessing. A relationship of trust has been established so that ministers and candidates are being called across federational lines, and joint home and foreign mission works are being undertaken together.

Organic unity is enjoyed, and is bearing fruit.

On the *organizational* side, however, we have not enjoyed the progress we might have hoped for. In 2007, URC Synod Schererville redirected the focus of our own Psalter Hymnal committee to return to the work on our own Songbook. The intent was not to shelve the work with the Canadian Reformed Songbook committee but, in time, that has been the effect. In 2012, the URC entered into an arrangement with the OPC to combine their efforts and the result has

been the Trinity Psalter Hymnal received at a concurrent Synod with the OPC in Wheaton in 2018. I highly recommend it.

In 2010, with our respective Theological Education Committees at something of an impasse, the URC committee was disbanded by its Synod London. Also, at that synod in 2010, the work of the Joint Church Order Committee, the *Proposed Joint Church Order* (PJCO) was received. It should be noted that whereas the Canadian Reformed Synod Burlington *adopted* the PJCO for provisional use in the new united federation, the URCNA Synod London *received* it for further study.

Sensing a persistent underlying hesitation with the pursuit of unity among the URCNA, the URC Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) decided to focus its attention on whether there might be an underlying doctrinal/confessional difference between our federations on the doctrine of the covenants. A colloquium was held during the meetings of Synod Visalia 2014. It has been known as the *California Covenant Conversation* and featured an excellent and helpful dialogue between Dr. Robert Godfrey and Dr. Cornel Venema of the URC along with Dr. Theodore Van Raalte and Dr. Jason Van Vliet from the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS).

The conclusion of the discussion was that, in spite of our historical differences and varieties of expression, we do nevertheless find each other's positions within Confessional bounds. We have, and therefore ought to enjoy, fundamental Confessional unity! The colloquium and the interaction that followed have been preserved for us in the book: *The Bond of the Covenant within the Bounds of the Confessions*, edited by J.A. Bouwers and T.G. Van Raalte.

Nevertheless, despite the wonderful results of the Colloquium, as that same synod Visalia continued, an indication from CERCU that it would consider recommending a Phase 3a Plan of Union for Synod 2016 was not endorsed. In an effort not to have to say "yes" or "no" to such a direction, Synod moved to postpone the recommendation indefinitely.

In its 2016 report to URC Synod (Wyoming), CERCU stated to the churches its commitment that it would not make any recommendations concerning stepping forward to the next phase of relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches for at least the next six years (i.e. Synod 2022). In the press and in public conversation this has been called things like "a moratorium," "a pause," or it is sometimes said that "the relationship is on hold." I don't believe that any of those terms are either helpful or correct. The *relationship* is not on hold. The relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship is still as strong as ever, and it ought to be enjoyed and engaged. The hope in taking this direction has been that by relieving of some of the immediate pressure toward unity in the short term, the cause of greater unity would be served in the long-term. It should be acknowledged however, in all honesty, that at the rate of the present engagement, a proposal to move to a Plan of Union, Phase 3a by 2022 is, at best, very unlikely.

Presently, the CanRefs' own CCU – Committee for the Coordination of Unity, seeing the writing on the wall, or, knowing the times, as it were, is recommending their own disbanding to Synod Edmonton 2019, putting the ongoing work into the hands of a broader committee CCCNA. (Committee for Contact with Churches in North America).

Setbacks, or at least *steps back*, to be sure. Yes, the progress has been *halting*. Our work at the *level of the various committees* has not borne the fruit that was initially hoped for. But we ought to remain *hopeful*, nonetheless. Because at the *level of organic fellowship and love*, there is much to be thankful for!

So, what about the future? Where are we going?

III. Future – *persistent, patient, creative and hopeful*

What the future holds is, of course, in the Lord's hands. I am neither a prophet, nor a son of a prophet, but I remain optimistic. I believe we have every reason to be optimistic. Let me urge us, then to persevere, to be persistent, patient with one another, gracious with one another, all in the humble amazement of the grace God has shown us in Christ! I do believe, living in the days we do, that we need each other more and more – and that goes beyond the CanRC and the URC.

I don't have any magical solutions, but do allow me to suggest four areas for consideration for the future:

1. Romans 12:18. In as much as depends upon you, be at peace with all men. It depends on you. **Let it begin with me.** Here is a call to personal engagement and individual responsibility.

My experience through the years has been that the interest in these matters has typically been stronger among the Canadian Reformed than the URC (is that reflected here tonight? Only somewhat). So, let me gently chide, rebuke and encourage my URC counterparts in the way of a friendly competition. – do you actually want it to be said that the Canadian Reformed are outdoing you in this pursuit?

With that challenge given, let me also humbly suggest that it would be far too easy to conclude that the Can Ref seek unity while the URC doesn't. One dynamic to keep in mind is the reality that the Can Ref have been living for 70 years trying to convince yourselves and the world that you really don't think you're the only true church. Therefore, this pursuit of unity has been an opportunity to put your money where your mouth is. The URCs, on the other hand, have come from a place where we were wary of federational bonds, had to leave them, and have now been more cautious about entering new ones.

Another thing, and I hope you can appreciate that I am trying to be very sensitive here and feel the need very intensely to acknowledge my and our own besetting sins. But if I could humbly challenge the Canadian Reformed, it would be about your need for greater self-awareness. It would be naïve to think that the challenge is as simple as saying – “well, we Canadian Reformed people have done all we could, and we're ready to go forward, it's the URCNA that keeps moving the boundaries and taking back their commitments.” But, one, are you really ready? And, two, are you conscientious of the things in your ethos that may have been, or may continue to be, disconcerting to people in the URC? Has there been a narrowness? Has there been an

unhelpful exclusivism? Has there been the tendency to treat historical precedent as though it were Biblical principal?

Some of that was perception, some of it is caricature, and, by God's grace, much of that has changed, thanks be to God! But are you sensitive to it still? Because – even if some of it may be uncharitable – the perception exists. No doubt we have logs in our own eyes too, but would to God that *all of us* by the grace of God could continue to learn to be gracious, honest, reaching and forgiving in dealing with these challenges? Of all people, *we* are called to be a people of grace. That's what must characterize us!

2. Moving on, another consideration for the future is, **what are we going to do about the 49th parallel?** It seems there is a wall there. I am speaking, of course about the dynamic that the Canadian Reformed federation is for all intents and purposes, as the name implies, a *Canadian* federation of churches. On the other hand, 2/3 of the URCNA is found south of the border. Relations among our respective churches in Canada are generally much further ahead of how this unity is experienced among our US URC churches. Any attempts to engage the US churches have often seemed forced and artificial and have not proved to be particularly helpful.

It has sometimes been suggested that a more successful way forward might be to divide the URC so the Canadian URCs and the CanRC can get on with union.

In answer to that, let me say a few things very quickly. First, I hope it's obvious that the idea of breaking one union to form another hardly seems right. While I must confess that in times of personal frustration the whole idea has had a certain appeal, I also want to say emphatically that I certainly do not want to lose the unity we have with our US brothers and sisters. Second, while relations are certainly more advanced in Canada, there's still the reality that many of our Canadian churches would still not see themselves as fully ready to be fully one. It is what it is. And, finally third, let me say that I believe with all of my heart that we need our US counterparts, and so do you! And they need us.

One of the dangers I would see in an exclusive Canadian united federation would be that a *cultural identity* would take precedence over our *confessional identity*. We are all, for the most part, an immigrant community, post World War II, and that has shaped the identity of both of our communities here in Canada. I do fear that putting us both together could potentially heighten the significance of that identity and perpetuate our isolation and *unhelpful* exclusiveness.

While not at all ashamed of our heritage, I am convinced that what we should want to emphasize is our confessional identity, not the cultural. Shall we look no further than the impact the postmodern, post Christian culture has had on both the old GKN as well as the recent developments in the GKNv to establish that point?

A few years back, a US ministerial colleague shared with me his fear that the addition of the Canadian Reformed churches would have the effect of turning back some of the advancements a number of our churches had made in becoming more outgoing and outreach oriented, precisely because of this perception of cultural narrowness. I believe his concerns were exaggerated, and I also see growth in these things to be very encouraged about among both of our federations in

Canada, but I *do* believe that all of us here in Canada could benefit from the influence of some of our American churches, the focus on outreach and church planting, for instance.

To that end, I also see our mutual engagement in NAPARC (both URC and CanRC) to have been a blessing. We all have much to learn about church planting and evangelism from the OPC, and even in some respects, the PCA, as well as others. I think particularly the OPC has been instrumental in showing how a strong confessional identity can be maintained while holding Christ forth to the world. It's a glorious gospel that's been entrusted to us! I also pray and trust this growing appreciation will be a blessing for the keeping and engagement of our young people who *know* they have been given much, and who also know a compulsion to share what we have in Christ with the world.

3. **What about a bigger umbrella?** Here is where, let me alert you, I am seeking to be a little creative, and this could potentially be controversial. Am I floating a balloon, dropping a bomb, or planting a seed? I'll let you decide. Let me just say quickly, since the URC is arguably a broader umbrella than the CanRC, might it be wise and expedient to consider seeking to have our federations of churches find themselves together under the present URC Church Order? I realize it may sound arrogant, but wouldn't the broader accommodate the narrower much easier than the other way around? It's even conceivable that Canadian Reformed congregations could maintain many, if not all their prized traditions and practices. Unity is not uniformity. Perhaps a super delegated assembly like a URCNA synod which calls for two delegates from each congregation could get unwieldy in a united federation in the future, but at least as a way to begin, I see a real advantage for the beginning days of a united federation of ministers and elders coming to know each other. With thanks to God we have seen this to be the case in the slow-growth toward maturity we have been experiencing in the URCNA. Also, the practicalities of working together in this way would probably lead us, in time, to move together in the direction of some of the tried and true CanRC practices. Think about it.

This may well be a bit too creative, a bit too crazy, but I do believe it's worth considering as a possible way forward.

4. Finally, in the interim, especially in Canada where we do have the luxury of living right alongside of each other (and therefore a greater responsibility), let's continue to work with what we have. We've done Streetlight and Campfire together. We've started to work together in Christian education. Let's see more of that! Cooperation and consultation have been enjoyed in the care of the disabled, in church plants in Ontario and Manitoba, on the mission field in Mexico. We've worshipped together on a regular basis. Let's continue to be obediently creative and continue to look for, pray for, work for ways for this to continue and to flourish at the local, classical, regional and even national level.

As we do so, may it be that it becomes evident to those like our American brothers and sisters who don't share the opportunities we do, that this is something that we *do* want, something that *does* work, and something that *is* a blessing also for the sake of the mission of the church, and it *does* bring God great glory!

To that end, we will need to be a people of earnest prayer as in our need and dependency we come to a deeper and deeper appreciation of God's amazing grace, together. We have so much to be thankful for. Let's celebrate it. Let's enjoy it. Let's engage it. And let's press on!

LITURGICAL FORMS COMMITTEE REPORT TO SYNOD REDEEMER 2020

Greetings in the name of the Lord.

The work of the Liturgical Forms Committee was relatively light since our last Synod. The Committee, reduced to two members, was tasked with publishing the Three Forms of Unity and the Forms and Prayers book digitally. We accomplished this work by contracting Mere Agency, a website developer. The product of this work is found at threeforms.org and formsandprayers.org. It is our hope and prayer that these websites will be of benefit to our churches, and to the church community more broadly, as well as to those who desire to know the faith more fully.

With this work completed, we believe the mandate of the Liturgical Forms Committee has been completed. There are ongoing matters which require addressing: the maintenance of the websites, and potential republications of the Forms and Prayers Book. This report offers recommendation on how to best fulfill those works. However, since the Liturgical Forms Committee has fulfilled its mandate, we believe it is time to disband this committee. We trust the work of the Committee will continue to be of service and benefit to the churches for years to come. And for the opportunity to serve the churches in this way, we give our humble thanks.

Recommendations:

1. We recommend the maintenance of the websites be given to the Website oversight committee.
2. We recommend that the republication of the Forms and Prayers Book be addressed in due course by the Canadian URCNA Corporation, the copyright holder and publisher of the book.
3. We recommend that this committee be disbanded with the thanks of the Synod.

MISSIONS COMMITTEE REPORT TO SYNOD REDEEMER 2020

I. Introduction

The call of Christ to, “Make disciples of all nations,” (Mt. 28:18) is one of the great callings of the Christian church. God promises in his word that the nations are to be the inheritance of our Savior (Ps. 2:8), and we labor in his power to see a day when, “Every knee should bow...and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Ph. 2:10-11). Wherever we serve, part of our calling is to give our prayers, labors, and gifts to the conversion of the lost and the discipleship of the found.

We are thankful for the work that has been done and continues in gospel proclamation for the increase of Christ’s Kingdom. Our missionaries and pastors are preaching the gospel to the lost, discipling believers, planting churches, training ministers and elders, and writing and distributing Biblical Reformed material for these purposes. Our Missions Coordinator, Rev. Richard Bout, continues his work with Consistories, Classes, missionaries and our committee, while working faithfully to facilitate greater effectiveness in fulfilling the great commission. We are thankful for the commitment to missions in the URCNA.

That being said, we are also humbled by the challenges we face as God’s children. The work of making disciples is not an easy one, and we all stumble in many ways. God teaches us in his word that human weakness will remain with us until glory, yet remarkably this very thing will advance his praise (2 Cor. 4:7, 12:9). This reality keeps us reliant upon God in our labors and reminds us of the Scriptural truth that while some plant and others water, only, “God gives the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6).

As you move on to read the URCNA Missions Committee report to Synod Wellandport 2020, we would like to invite you to read it in light of these central truths. Part of our calling in the last two years was to study models of missions and suggest changes to how we can grow as a URCNA in our missionary efforts. In doing this, we recognize that there is no mission polity that can guarantee the success of the missionary calling. Things like humility, prayer, dependence, and Spirit-given boldness and faithfulness are necessary; Missions Committees and polities are not. We recognize this as a Missions Committee and earnestly hope that the federation keeps this awareness and spirit before it in its planning, deliberations, and missionary efforts. The infrastructure is not the item of first importance when it comes to encouraging faithfulness in our churches as we seek to reach the lost. Character, faithfulness, and the grace of God through His Spirit and Word are the cornerstones for our service. Without this any method or model will fail.

With this awareness, however, we still move forward to encourage the churches to consider the benefit of broader input, accountability and help in the missionary task. We do this not because we believe committees are the answer, but because we believe that it is responsible to acknowledge the weaknesses found even in local churches. The broader church isn’t without weakness, but part of depending upon the Lord is a willingness to utilize the strengths God has placed in the broader body of Christ so that iron may sharpen iron. The Bible tells us repeatedly that there is wisdom, blessing, safety, and success in a multitude of counselors (Pr. 11:14, 15:22,

24:6, etc.). Our goal is to help our federation utilize that God-given wisdom in a way that honors God, strengthens the local church, reflects our unity in Christ, and keeps our focus where it should be in striving for faithfulness in reaching the lost.

Our report covers much ground, reflective of the tasks given us by Synod. Within our specific calling of presenting to Synod recommendations for growth in our model for cooperative missions, we note that the committee was not able to come to unanimity on this issue. The section pertaining to a new model of missions has both a majority and minority report. Please give both reports your careful consideration prior to the deliberations at Synod. We trust that the presentation of diverse viewpoints in the committee will be part of God's way of blessing our deliberations at Synod.

Synod recommitted to the Missions Committee, the document entitled, "International Seminary Students and the URCNA: A Way Forward" so that the committee might better formulate the proper way for our churches to encourage foreign nationals studying in North America (Acts of Synod Wheaton 2018, Art. 76, pages 51, 52). That document has been revised, and is once again before the churches.

While our primary focus over the last two years has been to serve in a study committee format, we have also continued to serve local churches and our missionaries as a hub for information and consultation, as requested by the churches. This work, also, is reported upon below.

Lord willing, during the week of Synod we will have the opportunity for a URCNA Missions Evening on June 9th. This is a wonderful opportunity where delegates and area church members alike can gather to hear about and pray for a wide array of mission works supported within the URCNA. We pray that this evening will continue to be rich a blessing and encouragement to our churches.

We are grateful for the opportunity over the last two years to serve our churches through the URCNA Missions Committee. You can find the membership of our committee and its current mandate (alongside the extra tasks assigned to us from Synod Wheaton) below.

Membership

The membership of the committee has changed dramatically in the past two years as a result of Synod Wheaton's decision to double the size of the committee. We presently have the following sixteen members on the committee with the officers of the committee noted. It should be noted that Classis Pacific Northwest did not appoint a second member to the committee.

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Classis Central U.S. | Rev. Jody Lucero (Vice-Chairman) |
| Classis Central U.S. | Elder Harold Meinders |
| Classis Ontario-East | Rev. John Bouwers |
| Classis Ontario-East | Rev. Harry Bout |
| Classis Eastern U.S. | Elder Steve Schulz |
| Classis Eastern U.S. | Rev. Paul Murphy |
| Classis Michigan | Elder Paul Wagenmaker |

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Classis Michigan | Rev. Casey Freswick (Clerk) |
| Classis Pacific Northwest | Rev. Jared Beard |
| Classis Pacific Northwest | <i>No second man appointed</i> |
| Classis SW Ontario | Rev. Greg Bylsma (Chairman) |
| Classis SW Ontario | Rev. Steve Williamson |
| Classis SW US | Elder Steve Howerzyl |
| Classis SW US | Rev. Tom Morrison |
| Classis Western Canada | Rev. Richard Anjema |
| Classis Western Canada | Elder Duane Konynenbelt |
| Missions Coordinator | Rev. Rich Bout |

Mandate

Policies for the Synodical Missions Committee and Missions Coordinator

A. Functions and Tasks of the Synodical Missions Committee, and of the Missions Coordinator

1. The committee would function as an information hub for URCNA missions, encouraging communication and facilitating cooperation among URCNA missionaries, church planters, councils, joint venture committees, classis mission committees, and congregations by doing the following:
 - (a) The committee shall obtain updates from the missionaries and church planters, from their respective councils, and from any joint venture committees or classis missions committees with which they are connected, for publication in the missions newsletter and missions page of the URCNA.org website.
 - (b) The committee shall ascertain and remain abreast of the disparate financial needs of missionaries, and disseminate pertinent information to URCNA councils (e.g., location, family, nature & needs of a particular ministry).
 - (c) The committee shall generally promote the cause of missions in the URCNA in a way that consistently represents our commitment to function as a covenanted body.
 - (d) The committee shall serve as an advisory committee to local consistories who are considering sending an ordained man to the foreign mission field in a long-term capacity. The advice of the Missions Committee should be sought by local consistories if they are considering sending such missionaries to the field.
 - (e) The committee shall serve as an advisory committee to foreign missionaries, sending consistories, JVCs, and classical committees (where applicable) to help them develop entrance, continuance, and exit strategies that are in line with our adopted guidelines for foreign missions.
 - (f) The committee shall gather information about the work of missions and church planting which could be contributed to a manual of helpful guidelines to assist Consistories, joint venture committees, classis missions committees, missionaries and church planters in the day-to-day activity of missions (this is addressed more specifically below).
 - (g) The committee shall produce a report on the work of URCNA missions to each synod.
 - (h) The committee shall have copies of the *Biblical and Confessional Basis for Missions*, along with the missions Policies and Guidelines, printed in booklet form and made available to all the churches.

After the Missions Committee (MC) requested that Synod appoint a study committee to study the structure of missions in the OPC, Synod doubled the size of the committee and mandated the committee “to investigate the current OPC model and the older CRC model (including financing) for their missionary endeavors, to see if they are feasible for the URC to use for our missionary endeavors, and if so to make specific recommendations for how we can do this” (Acts of Synod Wheaton 2018, Art. 76, pages 51, 52).

- I. Introduction
- II. Report of the Missions Coordinator
- III. Updates on Committee Work
 - a. Re-submission of the Statement on Students from Abroad
 - b. Advisory Matters
- IV. Recommendations for Growing Together in Missions
- V. Minority Report for Growing Together in Missions
- VI. Clerical and Financial Matters
- VII. Concluding Matters
- VIII. Appendix One
- IX. Appendix Two

II. Report of the Missions Coordinator – Synod Redeemer

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am grateful to present my fifth report as coordinator. 2019 has been a full and blessed year in the work for missions for our churches. The Lord has given his grace and strength to me and my family in this task.

Here is a summary of my day-to-day activities, regular and projected:

1) Regular Activities

- i. **Visiting of URCNA missions.** In the last two years, I had opportunity to visit many of our missionaries. Here are some of the highlights on my longer trips:
 - **Honduras** – January 22nd-29th, 2019 I visited Rev. Langendoen, together with one of the elder from his calling church (Immanuel URC Jordan), ON. Rev. Langendoen is now largely transitioned to Canada and is working in the Spanish migrant work there and spends about 1-2 months in Honduras. A replacement for the Langendoens has not been found. Presently they are trying to train leaders to take over the work there as a permanent solution.
 - **Costa Rica** - Feb. 13- March 2, 2019. For three and a half weeks I had the opportunity to serve with Rev. Green and the churches in Costa Rica. It was amazing to see the doors of opportunity for the gospel that are opening there, especially amongst the charismatic churches! I had opportunity to speak/preach almost every day. I was in CR with my wife Angela and 3 youngest children (personal cost).
 - **Gig Harbor, WA.** This is a new church plant that is under the supervision of the URC in Lynden, WA. It was a joy to meet the leadership (after many phone calls) and preach for them. Gig Harbour is still in need of a church-planter to lead there.
 - **Cambridge, Maryland.** I visited with Steve and Cathy Arrick in Cambridge and

- talked through the future of the mission. Since then this work has closed.
- **SUMMIT Youth Conference** – It was a privilege to take part again this year and to speak with the youth on “A Young Person’s Place in Mission Work”
 - ii. **URCNA Missions Conference** – Bonclarken NC - March 23 – 27th, 2019. I had the privilege of serving with Rev. Brian Cochran and Rev. Keith Davis in organizing this event. We had a great turnout, and a wonderful week of learning & fellowship took place. We hope to plan the next conference again in NC in 2021.
 - iii. **Publication of the Trumpet (monthly).**
 - iv. **Weekly prayer requests (sent the 1st of every month).**
 - v. **Updates on the missions website - urcnamissions.org.**
 - vi. **Financial needs.**
 - I regularly receive requests/communications throughout the year about our mission works that are in need of support.
 - At the end of the year, a letter was sent to all missionaries asking about needs, and then those needs were communicated to our churches.
 - vii. **Mission Committee meetings (monthly)**
 - viii. **Preaching and speaking in URCs.** I continue to accept invites for preaching, presentations and missions seminars, as my schedule allows.
 - This year I had the invitation to preach in two small URC churches in western Canada looking for help in revitalization and in forming a plan to reach their communities. I foresee much more of this kind of work will be needed in the future in the federation.
 - ix. **Prayer Map 2019.** This was updated and sent to all churches early in the year.
 - x. **Videos of Missionaries.** This project was begun this year through funding of URMA and so far, two videos have been made for missionaries. These introductory videos will be used on the mission’s website to introduce people to the church or mission (around 1-2 minutes). A number of videos for more of our missionaries are in the works.
 - xi. **Missionary Training Institute.** The proposal for the MTI is complete, and students interested. Right now, we are waiting for funding through URMA (about ½ of the \$60,000 budget has been raised).
 - xii. **Visiting of Seminaries.** In 2019 I had opportunity to visit and speak in MARS, WTSCA and Greenville Seminary about URCNA missions. I also maintain contact with mission-minded students from these three seminaries, as well as PTS and Toronto Baptist Bible College.
 - xiii. **Inter-church relationships.** I meet regularly with brothers from other NAPARC churches and have gotten to know the OPC, Can Ref and Free Reformed especially.
 - It was exciting that URC’s Rev. James and Ester Folkerts be sent with the OPC as missionaries to Uganda. Rev. This partnership that has been formed between the denominations will help us partner together on more fields DV.
 - I had opportunity to attend the yearly missions NAPARC meetings in September and it was, as always, a great blessing to hear of what God is doing in other part of the world.
 - These inter-church relationships are important as we seek to work together in the future.
 - xiv. **Missions Organizations.** I continue to seek to make connections with like-minded

organizations.

- I serve as an associate board member of Word & Deed and as an advisor to the United Reformed Missions Association.
 - We continue to partner with Rob Brinks of RMS and recommend our youth and churches to serve with them.
- xv. **Summer training program for Young People.** I regularly have YP approaching me about a place to serve, and because we have limited opportunities in our federation, many end up in other evangelical organizations (recently some even in the CRC). I have begun to research this, and this year my prayer is that concrete plans could be made for a STS-type of program, that would train YP for a few weeks and then take them to serve in a hands-on capacity on the field. Several of our present missionaries were called into missions through this kind of program, and it would be wonderful to see this begin in the URC.

3) Upcoming Activities:

- ii. February 12th – April 22nd – Tepic, Mexico.
 - Rev. Matt Van Dyken will be back on furlough, and we will be in the church in Tepic to take over for him.
 - Regular MC activities are continuing from the field.
- iii. May 10-19th – Trip to Uganda to visit the Folkerts and Van Esseldelfts.
 - Speaker at yearly retreat for OPC team.
- iv. June 8th-13th – Synod at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, ON

MC Activity Log – 2018-2020

2018

- **June 11-16th – Trip to Synod 2018 – Wheaton, IL.**
- June 26th – meeting – Rev. Ernie Langendoen
- June 27th – meeting – Rev. John Bouwers
- July 1 - Trumpet and Prayer requests sent.
- July 1st – 8th Vacation
- July 12th-14th **Trip to NJ/NY**
 - Meeting with eastern classical missions committee
 - Meeting with Rev. Rich Kuiken.
- July 14th – Niagara Spanish Ministry picnic
- July 18th – Visit with seminary student
- July 19th – Meeting with Rev. Hilmer Jagersma
- July 22 – Preach in St. Catherines URC, Spanish ministry
- July 24th – 27th – **Trip to CA**
 - Meeting with Escondido/Christ URC
- July 29th – Preach in Blessings Can Ref
- August 3rd-10th – Vacation
- August 11th – Visit with Matt & Anne-Marie Van Dyken
- August 23rd – Visit with Seminary student

- August 24th – 31st Vacation
- September 1st - Trumpet and Prayer requests sent.
- September 2nd – Preach Niagara church plant, preach in Spanish migrant
- September 9th – preach in Listowel URC, Lord’s Supper
- September 16th – preach in Redeeming Grace URC
- September 17th – 20th – **Trip - NAPARC World Consultations – Philadelphia**
- September 25th/26th – Visit with Rebekah B. – Divine Hope Seminary
- September 30th – meeting with seminary student
- October 1st - Trumpet and Prayer requests sent.
- October 4th-8th – help with Spanish migrant
- October 9th -11th – **Trip to MI**
 - Meeting with council of Bethany URC
 - Attended classis MI
 - Meeting with Rev. Steve and Nalini Poelman
 - Meeting with Rev. Brian Najapfour
- October 12th&13th – **URCNA YP Youth Conference – Aylmer, ON**
- October 14th – Lord’s Supper – Redeeming Grace URC
- October 24th – Meeting with Can Ref missionaries – Scott & Anne Marie Bredenhoef
- October 31 – Meeting with potential seminary students
- November 1st - Trumpet and Prayer requests sent.
- November 3rd – Regional missionary reunion
- November 8th – Meeting with ARP missionary to Africa – Rev. Tom Van Mannen
- November 12th – Meeting with Rev. Thabet Megaly, meeting with Rev. Ian Wildeboer
- November 15th – 19th – **Trip to URCNA in Big Springs, CA**
 - Visit with Rev. Nollie and Evelyn Malabuyo
 - Taught and preached in Big Springs URC.
- November 24th – **Speak at missions conference – Covenant URC**
- November 26th/27th Visit with Peter Wright (& Edmonton running team)
- December 1st - Trumpet and Prayer requests sent.
- December 1st – 7th – Help with sick migrant workers.
- December 6th – Meeting with missions reps from CanRef
- December 7th-10 – **Trip to URCNA church plant in Colorado Springs, CO.**
 - Meeting with Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen
 - Preached in Colorado Springs URC
 - Visited with leaders in church
 - Met with church-planter Tony Phelps
- December 15th – Regional Missionary Reunion
- December 30th – Preached in Wyoming URC.
- December 31st – Met with OPC church-planter Rev. Eric Watkins.

2019

- January 2-5th Young People’s Missions Conference – CROSS
- January 6 – Baptism Service - Redeeming Grace URC

- Jan 6 - Meeting with Overseeing Consistory of Living Water URCNA
- January 13 – Preach in Redeeming Grace URCNA
 - Visit with mission support worker – Rebekah Batterink
 - Visit with MINTS professor – Rev. Jose Ramirez
- January 14 – Missions class for local home-school group
- January 16 – Meeting with Rev. Arjan De Visser
 - Meeting with Can Ref Mexico missionaries Scott and Anne-Marie Bredenhof
- January 18 – meeting with Rev Al Bezuyen
- **January 22-28th TRIP to Honduras**
 - Visit/meetings with Rev. Ernie Langendoen/ Elder from Immanuel URC
 - Preach/teach in church in Comayagua
- January 31 -Trumpet and prayer requests sent
- **February 13th – March 9th TRIP to Costa Rica**
 - Visit/meeting with Rev. Bill & Aletha Green
 - Preaching/teaching in churches/ church plants.
 - Preaching/teaching in pastor association meetings
 - Classes in Christian elementary and high school
 - Bible studies/visits with Pastor Lester in Cartago.
- February 28th Trumpet and prayer requests sent
- March 17th – Preach in Burlington Can Ref
- March 20 - Classis SW
- **March 23 -27th TRIP - URCNA Missions Conference – Bonclarken NC**
 - **March 27th-30th Missions Committee Meeting, NC**
- March 31st - Trumpet and prayer requests sent
- April 3rd – Speaking and presentation in Greenville Seminary, SC
- April 9-10 – packaging and sending of prayer maps to URCNA churches
- April 14th – Preach in Redeeming Grace URC & Strathroy URC.
- April 5th – visit with seminary student
- April 16th – Meeting with Immanuel URC/ Ernie Langendoen about mission in Honduras.
- April 23rd – Meeting with seminary student, Rev. Eric Pennings, Rev. Al Bezuyen.
- April 26th – Missionary gathering
- April 28th – Preach/visit to New Horizons church plant.
- April 30th – House visitation with elders from Living Water URC
- April 31st - Trumpet and prayer requests sent
- May 5th – Visit to Hope Center – Rev. Tony Zekveld
 - Visit with Jose Ramirez – MINTS
- May 7th - Meeting with overseeing council in Living Water URCNA
- May 9th - Meeting/visit with Rev. Brian Zegers
- May 12th – Redeeming Grace office-bearers installation
- May 13th visit with seminary student
- May 14th-15th Meeting/conference of PCA ministers in the Greater Toronto Area
- May 17th – Meeting with Rev. Greg Bylsma
- May 19th Preach in Niagara migrant ministry
- May 25th – Visit/meeting - Rev. Eric Watkins – OPC

- May 27th – meeting/visit Rev. Hilmer Jagersma
- May 31st - Trumpet and prayer requests sent
- June 3rd – Meeting with Hispanics in Toronto
- June 5th – Classis meeting
- **June 6th-11th TRIP to Washington/Gig Harbour**
 - Meeting with Can Ref elders concerning mission in Mexico
 - Meeting/visit with Rev Mark Stromberg & Rev. Mark Vander Pol
 - Meeting/visit with Rev. Mark Stewart
 - Evangelism seminar in Burlington URC
 - Visit with leaders in Gig Harbour church plant
 - Preach in Gig Harbour Church plant.
- June 11th – meeting with Rev. Arjan De Visser
- June 16th – preach in Listowel URC
- June 18th – meeting with Rick Postma from Word and Deed
- June 25th – Muslim discussion evening – Word of Life ministry – Brian Zegers
- June 30th - Trumpet and prayer requests sent
- July 5th – Meeting Rev. Al Bezuyen
- July 7th – preach in Fellowship Can Ref and Blessings Can Ref
- July 13th – Migrant Picnic Outreach
- July 14th – Preach in Niagara Falls
- July 15th – visit with seminary student, Rev. Thabet Megaly, Rev Matt Vandyken
- **July 19th – 22nd TRIP to NJ/NY**
 - Meeting with Eastern classis missions committee
 - Visit/meeting with Rev. Sam Perez
 - Visit/meeting with Rev. Rich Kuiken
 - Preach in Jersey City, NJ church plant
- July 28th – preach in Redeeming Grace URC and Living Water URC
- July 31 - Trumpet and prayer requests sent
- **August 5th-12th Visit to Calgary/Regina church plant**
 - Summit Reformed Youth Conference - August 5-8th.
 - Visit to URCNA church plant in Regina, SK – August 8th-12th
 - Met with Rev. Cochran and leaders in the church.
 - Preached the 7th.
- Vacation – August 16-30th
- August 31 - Trumpet and prayer requests sent
- September 4th & 5th - Visit to Mid-America Reformed Seminary.
 - Met with missionaries & board.
 - Met with seminary students.
- September 8th – Spanish Migrant ministry - preaching.
- September 10 – Meeting with World Renew
- September 11 – Classis SW Ontario
- September 15 – Preached in Migrant Ministry
- **September 17 & 18th – Trip to PA – NAPARC Missions Meetings**
- **September 20 – 26th – Trip to CA**
 - Sept 20 – 23rd – Visit to Ontario Spanish church-plant

- Seminar on local evangelism
 - Preaching in Spanish
 - Meeting with Ontario URC council.
- Sept 2 – Preached in Ontario URC
- Sept 22 - Visit to Westminster and met with students, faculty, and gave URC missions presentation.
- September 22 – Meeting with councils of Christ URC & Santee URC to discuss the mission works in Italy.
- September 24 – Visit to classis PNW - presentation.
- September 30th - Trumpet and prayer requests sent
- **October 5th -7th Trip to Grand Prairie URCNA**
 - Meeting with leadership
 - Evangelism seminar/preached
- October 7th – TV program with Thabet Megaly
- October 13th – preached in Dunnville URCNA
- **October 19th-21st TRIP to Cambridge, Maryland, Washington DC.**
 - Visit/meeting with Rev. Steve & Cathy Arrick
 - Preached
 - Visit with Brian Lee/leaders in Washington DC.
- October 25th - Meeting with Rick Postma – Word & Deed
- October 28th-Nov. 4th Visit from Daniel Lobos – CLIR Costa Rica
 - Meeting with URCNA churches
 - Meeting with Word & Deed
- October 31st - Trumpet and prayer requests sent
- November 4th - TV program with Thabet Megaly in English/Arabic
- November 12 – Meeting with Rev. Greg Bylsma
- **November 15th-18th TRIP to Leduc, Alberta.**
 - Evangelism seminar & preaching.
 - Meeting with church leadership.
 - Visit with Rev. Bill Pols, Peter Wright
- **November 23rd-26th – TRIP to Chicago Heights, IL.**
 - Evangelism seminar & preaching.
 - Meeting/visit with Rev. Ruben Sernas.
 - Visit with MARS students and area pastors.
- November 30th - Trumpet and prayer requests sent
- December 2nd – Migrant ministry visit
- December 11th – Migrant ministry visit
- December 12th – Classis Dunnville
- December 13 – Missionary Gathering
- December 16 - Migrant ministry visit
- December 18 – migrant ministry visit.
- December 19th Visit/meeting with Rev. Matt & Anne-Marie Van Dyken
- December 24th – Migrant Christmas service – Preached
- December 31st - Trumpet and prayer requests sent

2020

- January 6 – Meeting with seminary student.
- **January 8-10 Trip to MI**
 - Presentation of missions plan for MI classis
 - Meetings with area pastors
- January 16 – meeting with Hope URC, Rev. Van Dyken and members of committee about Tepic, Mexico.
- January 16-18th – Speaker at Canadian Reformed Missions Conference.
- January 19th – preach in URCNA church plant in Niagara Falls
- January 20 – meeting with Covenant URC Toronto about Hispanic ministry.
- **January 28th-31st Trip to Phoenix, AZ for Missions Committee Meeting**
- February 2 – Preach in Redeeming Grace URC.
- Feb. 10 – meeting Matt VD.
- **February 12- April 22, 2020 – Trip to Tepic, Mexico to replace Rev. Matt Van Dyken during his furlough.**

RECOMMENDATION 1: To receive the report of the URCNA Missions Coordinator and express the thanks of Synod for his continued faithful and diligent service.

III. Updates on Committee Work

Re-submission of the Statement on Students from Abroad

Our committee spent considerable time reformulating a new statement attempting to respond to the directives that Synod Wheaton 2018 gave us. We sent it out to the churches, but only two responded (both in favor of the revision). We are convinced that what follows is a positive revision and submit it to the Synod for approval.

International Seminary Students and the URCNA

Background

In recent years, with adequate theological education lacking in their home countries, an increasing number of men from abroad have come to seminaries in North America to study for the gospel ministry. Our seminaries have opened their doors to these men and have done much to prepare them. We are very thankful to God for returning so many men to their homelands where they are faithfully preaching the gospel for the advance of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The question that arises is, what sort of relationship should the URCNA seek with seminary students from other countries? The Missions Committee is well aware of the fact that some of our current foreign missionaries are nationals of those countries where they are serving. We support these men, and are fully committed to encouraging the churches of the federation to continue supporting them as well.

But going forward in new ventures, our federation must consider how we can most responsibly

and faithfully engage in foreign missions for the long term. Having studied the pertinent issues and the practices represented in NAPARC, the Missions Committee offers the following as pastoral advice for our churches.

I. Common Difficulties in Sending Foreign Nationals

There are some advantages to ordaining an international seminary student, and sending him back to his homeland to serve as a foreign missionary for a North American church (e.g. training in foreign language and culture will be unnecessary so that the man can more quickly begin his labor in the mission field). Yet numerous Reformed communions have steered away from this practice which has historically not worked well. While the following pitfalls will not be found in every instance of hiring a former international seminary student to serve as our foreign missionary, we offer them as real dangers often connected to the practice.

A. The Foreign Church Can Develop Dependency on the North American Church:

Sending churches in North America might aim to take care of the needs of their foreign mission works in a manner that encourages those connected with the mission to be perpetually dependent on their caretakers – this sort of dependency can hinder the maturation of the mission in various ways. It must be acknowledged that dependency can develop in domestic as well as foreign missions, regardless of the origin of the sending church or of the missionary. But when we send one of our own men to a foreign field, all parties involved in the mission should understand from the start that this missionary is seeking to establish an indigenous disciple-making church so that he can eventually return home, thus ending the mission's dependence on a foreign church for leaders and for the remuneration of those leaders.

The danger in sending a foreign man back to his homeland as our foreign missionary is that such a practice can severely hinder maturation in the mission work. If the man, now back in his home country, is employed by and indefinitely remains on the payroll of a North American church, the relationships between the missionary and the countrymen he attempts to serve can be adversely affected – they may, in fact, resent him as a hireling of the foreign church that sent him. Such dependency can also adversely affect the relationship between the missionary and his fellow pastors on the ground. In many cases, a large salary differential has caused jealousy and division within the national church. There is, therefore, increased risk of dependency in the case of employing a foreign national to serve as a missionary for the URCNA.

B. The North American Church Can Develop Dependency on Those Abroad

As much as a foreign mission can develop a harmful dependency on its sending North American church, so also the sending North American church can develop an unhealthy dependency when it makes a practice of employing national men as its foreign missionaries. We are referring to an outsourcing of foreign missions which happens in two ways.

First, since the foreign man naturally possesses great knowledge about his own country/culture, the sending church can easily become passive with regard to investigating the foreign field and overseeing its missionary. *Secondly*, the North American church can easily develop a

dependency on foreign countries to supply it with missionaries instead of raising up and sending its own to the foreign field. Our federation has to grapple honestly and faithfully with God's calling us to raise up our own men and women for ministry in foreign missions. A healthy church is a sending church.

The various aspects of dependency outlined above will not happen in every instance of employing a foreign man as our foreign missionary. But they have historically happened with such regularity that various NAPARC churches have made it their policy not to employ foreign nationals as their missionaries. The URCNA would be wise to learn from history and from much older and experienced sister churches.

II. A More Responsible Way Forward in Working with Foreign Nationals

The difficulties that can arise in sending foreign nationals as our missionaries should not lead us to ignore either the ways in which we might positively serve our brothers and sisters in other nations or the ways in which they might positively serve God and His Kingdom with the gifts He has given them. The goal of this document is neither to prevent future cooperation with foreign churches, nor to cut ties to Christians from other nations who study in North America. Rather, the goal is to help the URCNA work wisely and faithfully to avoid potential pitfalls, and to promote a path leading to the greatest Kingdom benefit when such opportunities for cooperation with foreign Christians and churches arise. To that end we suggest the following guidelines for working with international seminary students who seek URCNA support for mission work in their home countries.

A. Conduct Thorough Vetting of Potential Pastors and Their Home Church

The New Testament shows us a local church which identified and approved qualified men from its own number, and then sent out those men as missionaries (cf. Matt 28:16-20; Acts 13:1-3). This is the model we have sought to follow in our Church Order when we state in Art. 3, "Competent men should be urged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man who is a member of a church of the federation and who aspires to the ministry must evidence genuine godliness to his Consistory, which shall assume supervision of all aspects of his training . . ." Ordinarily, such competency is established in the local church as men demonstrate before those church leaders who know them best not only a genuine godliness but also a commitment to serve the Lord and others. Men who meet the qualifications listed in I Timothy 3, and who show that they have the gifts to be a minister of the Word, are recommended for consideration.

But how do we determine this competency and genuine godliness in the case of men who come from other countries? Here we are ordinarily working with two church bodies – the foreign home church and the church in North America. North American churches must develop a very close relationship with foreign men and their home churches *before* deciding to work together in mission. Much work is required to establish such a relationship. The national church will need to be visited, and a translator (who is not the international seminary student) will often need to be used.

In its communications with the foreign church that sent a man to seminary, the local United

Reformed church should carefully think through and ask the following questions regarding that student's Christian life and service:

1. How has it been established that the candidate meets the qualifications for pastor as laid out in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3?
2. How has it been established that the man has been faithful in his life and doctrine both during and before seminary (i.e. while living in his home country)?
3. Have the requisite gifts for pastoring and church-planting been demonstrated in the life of the candidate before and throughout his seminary education?
4. How has the man demonstrated long-standing commitment to service in a local church?

Once such questions have been answered to the satisfaction of the sending church, missionary partnership with the man's home church can be properly considered.

B. Determine the Best Strategy for Cooperation in Kingdom-Work Abroad

The Missions Committee proposes three strategies that should guide the URCNA in working with international seminary graduates who desire to return home to serve as gospel ministers. These should serve as helpful categories both for local churches hoping to continue a support relationship with a foreign national and for international seminary students who are hoping for a relationship with the URCNA in the future.

1. **Blessing** – This pertains to a country where we are not currently working. In such a situation an official relationship with the URCNA would not normally be considered a possibility because we aim to strengthen foreign fields where we are currently active. To give our blessing may involve the following:
 - a. The former international student returns to his home church with the blessing, encouragement, and prayer support of the URCNA congregations that he has come to know during his seminary training.
 - b. The student would not be sent, ordained or funded by the URCNA.
 - c. A request could be made for the federation to investigate the possibility of opening a new mission field in the home country of the seminary graduate.
2. **Partnership** – This pertains primarily to countries where we are already working. A candidate and his home church could enter into a partnership with the URCNA for the cause of the gospel. Such a partnership would involve the following:
 - a. Contact is made with the foreign church by the Missions Committee and a relationship developed with them.
 - b. An on-site visit is made to the field to understand more fully the situation, to talk to leaders, and to determine their needs and how best to work together.
 - c. The seminary graduate is ordained by his home church; his oversight would ideally be exercised by the leaders who sent him to North America to study.
 - d. Any financial support sent by the URCNA is paid through the local foreign church. The elders and deacons of that church determine a faithful pay scale, and administer the funds as needed.
 - e. Financial support would ordinarily be on a declining scale for 5-8 years so as

to encourage the local church to take financial responsibility for their own pastor rather than his being an “employee” of a western church.

3. **Direct Oversight** – Though generally discouraged, this option pertains to exceptional cases where it is demonstrated that a foreign man would become a missionary ordained and funded by the URCNA, and sent to one of our active fields. Ordinarily, it would be considered only in cases where the foreign man, after graduating from seminary, has been active in gospel ministry within URCNA congregations over a period of some years.¹

Conclusion

By following these policies, our federation will be able to present a clear path to international seminary students and graduates. They are encouraged to remain intimately connected and accountable to the foreign church which sent them to seminary; yet, as opportunities arise, we give due consideration to working in cooperation with foreign men and their churches in a manner that does not hinder but aids those churches in becoming healthy and responsible (self-sustaining, self-governing, and self-propagating). At the same time, our federation must strive to be responsible with the resources that the Lord has entrusted to us so that we engage more effectively in foreign missions for the long term. The policies outlined here will help the URCNA not only to focus on raising up and sending out missionaries from our own churches, but also to dedicate ourselves administratively and financially to that goal without ignoring the needs of our sister churches throughout the world.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That Synod adopt the “International Seminary Students and the URCNA” as pastoral advice to the churches in working with international seminary students who desire to return to their home countries as URCNA missionaries.

RECOMMENDATION 3: That Synod encourage the Missions Committee to use, “International Seminary Students and the URCNA” as they advise churches and international students regarding cooperation with foreign nationals in gospel ministry abroad.

B. Advisory Matters

Over the last two years we have been invited by local Consistories to give advice with the goal of helping them develop entrance, continuance, and exit strategies that are in line with our adopted guidelines for foreign missions. In the last two years we have met with the Consistories, local missions committees or representatives thereof from the following churches:

¹Note the guidelines developed by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church’s Committee on Foreign Missions: “In the cultural context of missions, the maintenance of a national believer in the country of his origin, as a representative of a foreign church, can easily be harmful to his ministry and to the church in which he labors. To minimize this difficulty, the Committee ordinarily shall not support a national as a missionary of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the country of his origin unless he is a citizen of the United States, has lived in the United States at least ten years, and has been engaged for at least five years in an active service as a minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church” (p. 26 of the *Manual of the Committee on Foreign Missions*, section 4.1.4.3).

Hope URC, Brampton (overseeing Rev. Matt VanDyken in Mexico)
Escondido URC and Christ URC, Santee (regarding Reformation Italy)

These visits have gone to various depths depending upon the interest and desires of the local churches. We are grateful to God for his blessing in all the various mission works, and we pray that God will continue to strengthen the various fields in the federation so that we can see teams of individuals working to establish numerous churches in different areas of the world.

IV. Recommendations for Growing Together in Missions – Majority Report

A. Background

Synod Wheaton 2018 mandated the URCNA Missions Committee to, “Investigate the current OPC model and the older CRC model (including financing) for their missionary endeavors, to see if they are feasible for the URC to use for our missionary endeavors, and if so to make specific recommendations for how we can do this”² (Art. 76.7, Minutes of Synod Wheaton). Two further decisions came from Synod Wheaton in this same regard. First, Synod added that, “The question of a federational missions fund could be taken up as part of a study committee’s mandate to study the OPC model” (Art. 76.11). Second, our committee was increased from 9 to 17 members, with each Classis asked to delegate an additional member to the URCNA Missions Committee (Art. 115.1) to help with the magnitude of the work.

Since receiving this mandate from Synod Wheaton, the committee has researched numerous models of missional oversight within NAPARC and has given particularly close attention to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), older Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and our own current Joint Venture Committee model. Our goal has been to move from this research to a recommendation to Synod 2020 that will create a more cooperative plan for missions in the URCNA.

We praise God for the mission work among our churches, both domestically and abroad. We are also extremely grateful for the zeal for missions that we believe is growing, among us. As we continue to experience this blessing, and pray for more growth, we recognize that moving beyond our current fragmented approach and toward a more integrated “approach” will require our working together in a new way. While acknowledging that no organizational structure could possibly be the answer to all of our challenges, this plan seeks to help the URCNA grow in faithfulness, wisdom, effectiveness and zeal for the advance of God’s gospel kingdom, recognizing always that we labour as those fully reliant and dependent upon the blessing of our God. In developing this plan we have sought to incorporate and build upon the best of our current mission practices, to remain true to our understanding of biblical church polity, to keep a focus on the goals for missions as confirmed in our federationally approved policies and guidelines (see *the Foreign Missions Manual* and *How to Plant a Reformed Church*) and to learn what we can from our sister churches with experience, faithfulness and fruitfulness in the missionary endeavour.

Key Areas of Emphasis

² Art. 76.7, Minutes of Synod Wheaton

In forming this recommendation to Synod, we wanted to maintain:

1. The importance of seeing our missionary task primarily expressed in bringing the gospel to the unconverted (Church Order, Art. 47) for the making and growing of disciples.
2. Our commitment to mutual support in missionary endeavours among our churches (Art. 47).
3. The sole authority of local Consistories to call and send missionaries (Art. 47).
4. The recognition of wisdom through a multitude of counsellors (Foundational Principles, # 9).
5. The importance of recognizing the holy catholic church and proper ecumenical relations on the mission field (Art. 34-36)
6. The adopted guidelines for domestic missions expressed through the Synodical support of the domestic missions manual, *How to Plant a Reformed Church*
7. The adopted guidelines for foreign missions expressed through the Synodical support of the “Foreign Missions Manual.”

In researching models of missions from the OPC and from past years in the CRC, we saw need for growth in the following areas:

1. broader accountability and federational cooperation in sending missionaries and providing them with effective direction as well as spiritual oversight;
2. creating clear avenues through which interested pastors and seminary students can reach the field;
3. healthy relationships on foreign fields not only with other NAPARC missionaries but also with foreign churches;
4. a method of funding that could readily support the potential expansion of missionary efforts (e.g. training, internships, start-up funds, etc.);
5. recognizing the importance of non-ordained assistants in domestic and foreign missions;
6. the importance of partnership and support for pastors involved in missions;
7. the involvement of smaller congregations in the work of domestic and foreign missions.

We believe that the following plan will help us in the URCNA to grow in missions together. This plan seeks to build upon the best of our current mission practices, to maintain our mutual commitment to our current Church Order, and to develop greater organizational structure for a more responsible and effective work in missions.

Considering Feedback

After conducting research and deliberating upon it, we moved as a committee to draft a list of key proposals that we believed would help the URCNA to become more cooperative and effective in missions. Those proposals were sent to the churches for their feedback in November 2019. We wish to express our hearty thanks to those many consistories, church planters and missionaries who took the time to submit thoughtful feedback to our initial five proposals.

A significant amount of the feedback we received from consistories expressed concern that our churches not lose sight of the crucial and blessed role of the local church in sending and overseeing missionaries and church planters. In our proposed plan we seek to make abundantly clear that we wholeheartedly agree with that concern. The feedback we received from men doing the work of missions and church planting in our federation showed that many of them were in favour of the five proposals; these men shared how helpful they believed it would be for consistories to have broader support and expertise in overseeing their missionaries and church planters. For some, these conclusions came through experiencing difficulties, misunderstandings, and the struggles of distance. Many who labor in isolation feel that the weight and burden of this work is largely on their own shoulders. For others, these conclusions came through seeing the blessing of working with churches outside our federation with greater infrastructure, and seeing firsthand what a blessing it was to have that help in carrying out the missionary endeavour.

We are very grateful for the feedback that we received, as it demonstrates a lively interest among us in the mission of the church. Having given prayerful and careful consideration to all of the responses submitted to our committee, we have amended and improved the proposed plan.

B. Research Highlights

1. The Older Christian Reformed Church Model

Synod Wheaton 2018, Art. 76.7 mandated the Missions Committee to “investigate the current OPC model and the older CRC model (including financing) for their missionary endeavors, to see if they are feasible for the URC to use for our missionary endeavors, and if so to make specific recommendations for how we can do this.”

Since there is some question as to what, precisely, the “older CRC model” would be, we will seek to summarize developments into and throughout the 20th century, up to and including the time of the 1965 revision of the CRC Church Order.

In 1914, an English rendition of the Church Order of Dort was adapted and adopted by the CRC synod. Art. 51 of the 1914 Church Order read as follows: *The Missionary Work of the Church is regulated by the General Synod in a Mission Order*. It is significant to note that the original Church Order of Dort contained no specific article pertaining to missions. Van Dellen and Monsma explain how the original Art. 51 pertained to the use of two languages in the churches of the lowlands in the 17th century. 1914 saw the introduction of this article on missions in place of the original focus.³ It is also important to note in this article the use of the term “Church” in the singular. Van Dellen and Monsma comment as follows:

The expression “of the Church” in this Art. is singular in form but plural in significance. For, as all will grant, the term does not refer to any particular or local Church. Neither does it refer to the Church of Christ as that term is used in Art. 1 of this Church Order. It refers to all the Churches of the denomination, thought of as one united whole.⁴

³ Van Dellen and Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary*, 1941: 217.

⁴ *Ibid*, 1941: 218.

The regulation of this work by the churches together through the decisions of the General Synod was clearly specified in this 1914 Church Order Art. 51. The guidelines by which this was to be done were also specified, namely, by a Mission Order. The Mission Order was a brief explanatory document that stood alongside of the Church Order. The 1939 Mission Order states its purpose in a preamble: “That order and unity may be maintained in the mission work of the Church, certain rules and regulations must be observed.” It then goes on in eight articles to detail the respective responsibilities of the Synod, the Christian Reformed Board of Missions, the Executive Committee, the Field Agencies through which the Board functions, the Secretary of Missions, the Calling Churches, the Ordained Missionaries, and finally, the Unordained Missionaries. This 1939 Mission Order would be most characteristic of what we might consider the “older CRC model” throughout most of the 20th century. It was replaced in 1987.

Richard R. DeRidder, in his study, *The Development of the Mission Order of the Christian Reformed Church*, chronicles the evolution of missions and its oversight in the CRC in connection with the successive Mission Orders adopted by Synod over the years. It was not until 1886, 29 years after the inception of the denomination that the CRC began its “own work among the heathen.”⁶ In 1888, the first Mission Order was formulated, and it was very brief. It occasioned much confusion and disagreement since it failed to specify the relationship between the church and the synodical committee. The confusion was such that the first missionary was called by the synodical committee not by a church.⁷ Synod subsequently clarified that a call should come from the local church.

The 1898 Mission Order was more elaborate than the one it succeeded, but took things in a more decidedly synodical direction, believing that not the local church, nor the board, but the synod was best suited to supervise the work of missionaries.⁸ The Synod of 1910 went on record to declare that “the calling of missionaries to home and foreign fields should take place through a local church designated by the synod.”⁹ We note the recognition of the necessity of the missionary’s call coming from a local church, but also note that the designation of which local church should do the calling was considered a synodical prerogative.

The 1912 Mission Order took matters in a direction that decidedly emphasized the responsibility of the local church. The appointment, rules, and supervision of the missionary “proceed from the sending church (or churches) in consultation with the Classical Missions Committee, who on occasion shall be informed of the way in which these matters are discharged at regular Consistory meetings, at which they have a seat with advisory vote.”¹⁰ As the mission grew, however, particularly in China, it became evident that these developments were moving beyond the capability of the local church, and in actual fact, in many cases, the local church was involved in little else than calling the missionary.¹¹ In light of these developments, the 1939

⁵The full title is *Mission Order for the Indian and China Missions of the Christian Reformed Church*, CRC Acts of Synod 1939: 191-195. <https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1939acts.pdf>

⁶ Richard R. DeRidder, *The Development of the Mission Order of the Christian Reformed Church*, 1956: 51.

⁷ Ibid, 58.

⁸ Ibid, 70.

⁹ Ibid, 85.

¹⁰ Ibid, 92.

¹¹ Ibid, 111.

Mission Order was put in place and moved things in the direction of Synodical control with the appointment of The Christian Reformed Board of Missions as its “agency to carry out its decisions.”¹²

The 1939 Mission Order, which we take to be representative of what we would consider the “older CRC model,” proceeds next “upon the principle that Synod shall, as far as possible, control all of our denominational mission work,” by such means as determining the fields, appointing the individual churches to extend missionary calls on Synod’s behalf, and make final decisions as to the expansion or retrenchment of the work, etc.¹³The calling churches are “designated by Synod to call and to send out officially in the name of Synod, the missionaries chosen by Synod.”¹⁴The calling churches “shall keep in personal contact with their missionaries, and, in conjunction with the church and Classis in the midst of which the missionaries labor, have oversight as to their doctrine and life.”¹⁵

The 1939 [CRC Foreign] Mission Order is available here:

<https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1939acts.pdf> on pages 191-195. Some of the details, in summary, are as follows:

- The membership of the board was one delegate from each classis, and three delegates-at-large elected by Synod. They would meet annually.
- Since there were 18 classes spread over North America, the board had an executive committee, made up of the three delegates-at-large as well as a delegate from each classis in Michigan and Illinois. These ten members met bi-monthly.
- A missionary was called to a specific post in the field by an individual church, after the man, position, and calling church had been designated by Synod (or the Mission Board).
- The board had a secretary elected by Synod, whose duties were explicitly spelled out. Every year, he would visit the General Conference (i.e., field committee) and the missionaries themselves. He would counsel the missionaries and promote harmony between them. Two delegates of the board would accompany him on his visits.
- There was a field committee (“General Conference”) under the oversight of the board. There is almost no description of the field committees in the 1939 order.
- The calling church was responsible for overseeing its missionary’s doctrine and life. The missionary updated his calling church and the board quarterly. The board would not change the location or nature of work of any missionary without first consulting with the missionary and calling church.
- From the 1939 Acts (p. 174), the missionaries’ salaries were paid directly by classes or by the calling churches. The mission expenses and the salaries of the unordained workers were paid for by the board. A calling church could be exempted from its quota for the relevant field if it paid more than two thirds of the salary of the missionary.

Subsequently, the 1987 Mission Order replaced the 1939 Mission Order. At this point matters were effectively put into the hands of the Executive Committee in more of a centralized manner. This takes us beyond the era of the “older CRC model” and beyond any usefulness for the purposes of our study as URCNA.

¹² *CRC Acts of Synod 1939*: 191.

¹³ *CRC Acts of Synod 1939*: 191.

¹⁴ *CRC Acts of Synod 1939*: 194.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 194.

There was also a corresponding Home Mission Order. The 1959 Home Mission Order of the Christian Reformed Board of Missions would be the most representative of what we might consider the “older CRC model” of home missions.¹⁶ It can be found here <https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1959agendaacts.pdf> on pages 202-207.

Some highlights of the 1959 CRC Home Missions Order are as follows:

- The Home Mission Board was responsible to and elected by Synod.
- The board was composed of one member from each classis, usually a member of the classical home missions committee. There were also six members-at-large, three to serve on the (central) executive committee, and three from outlying areas. The 18 member board met once a year.
- Because of the distance, the board had a smaller centrally located executive committee, with the three members-at-large, to carry on the work of the board. The executive committee met once a month.
- On the board, there was a full-time executive secretary responsible for correspondence, agenda, and visits. There was also a minister of evangelism responsible for preparing plans and materials, training, providing counsel, and speaking.
- The secretary would periodically visit the home missionaries, and visit as necessary the congregations and classes. He was to be diligent in encouraging churches to become calling and supporting churches for missionaries.
- The board was not to lord it over the local church, but to seek their consent and participation. In a new work, sometimes the board recommended that the local church take on the work. Sometimes it recommended that the board do so, with the cooperation of the church. Local churches could request aid of the board, but needed to seek this permission at the next Synod. The board functioned as "consultants to local churches carrying on a mission program."
- Classes would bring possible new fields to the attention of the board for study.
- In terms of finances, the board received quotas from all the churches and dispensed these funds to the home missionaries.

The articles pertaining to missions in the 1965 CRC Church Order Revision reflect well what may broadly be considered the “older CRC model.” They are as follows:

Art. 73

a. In obedience to Christ’s Great Commission the churches must bring the gospel to all men at home and abroad, in order to lead them into fellowship with Christ and His Church.

b. In fulfilling this mandate, each consistory shall stimulate the members of the congregation to be witnesses for Christ in word and deed, and to support the work of home and foreign missions by their interests, prayers and gifts

Art. 74

a. Each church shall bring the gospel to unbelievers in its own community. This task shall be sponsored and governed by the consistory.

b. This task may be executed, when conditions warrant, in cooperation with one or more neighboring churches.

Art. 75

¹⁶CRC Acts of Synod 1959: 202-206. <https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1959agendaacts.pdf>

The classes shall, whenever necessary, assist the churches in their local evangelistic programs. The classes themselves may perform this work of evangelism when it is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches. To administer these tasks each church shall have a classical home missions committee.

Art. 76

a. Synod shall encourage and assist congregations and classes in their work of evangelism and shall also carry on such home mission activities as are beyond the scope and resources of minor assemblies.

b. To administer these activities synod shall appoint a denominational home missions committee, whose work shall be controlled by synodical regulations.

Art. 77

a. Synod shall determine the field in which the joint foreign missions work of the churches is to be carried on, regulate the manner in which this task is to be performed, provide for its cooperative support, and encourage the congregations to call and support missionaries.

b. To administer these activities synod shall appoint a denominational foreign missions committee, whose work shall be controlled by synodical regulations.

We believe there are helpful elements here. Considering this survey as a whole, however, it is not difficult to see how eventually and regrettably the engagement of the local church began to wane in the unfolding CRC model of missions. As URCNA we have come again to consider the emphasis on the local church engagement to be indispensable. However, our opportunities for growth and desire for greater effectiveness in our missional task also opens our eyes to the need for cooperation and coordination among us at the federational and classical levels. While the genius of our Dortian Church Order heritage emphasizes the primacy of the local church, it does not permit us to fall into the dangers of independentism, congregationalism or even consistorialism.

Classic Dortian polity has always included the following acknowledgment with regards to the work of the assemblies together. 1914 Church Order Art. 30 reads as follows:

In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the Churches of the major assembly in common.

Van Dellen and Monsma helpfully explain that references to “major assemblies” and “minor assemblies” here are not to be taken in the sense of “higher” and “lower,” but in terms of larger and smaller. The URCNA Church Order captures this understanding by stipulating in URCNA Church Order Art. 16 that “Classis and synod are broader assemblies that exist only when meeting by delegation. Only the Consistory is a continuing body.” URCNA Church Order 25 likewise maintains the principle that “In the broader assemblies only those matters that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches of the broader assembly in common, shall be considered.” We take note that Van Dellen and Monsma include missionary work as one of those items that pertain to the churches in common, to the effect that the churches

may take action together in connection with the work that is shared in common.¹⁷ This commitment and connectionalism is also reflected in the URCNA Church Order's *Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government* points 7-9, where it is stated "even though churches stand distinctly next to one another, they do not thereby stand disconnectedly alongside one another."

The following remarks of Van Dellen and Monsma in their 1941 *Church Order Commentary* are apropos to our study:

Reformed church polity is a well-balanced system of church government. It seeks to do full justice to the inherent rights of the individual Churches, but it also recognizes the need of cooperation and it acknowledges the authority of all the Churches working together through major assemblies.

Essentially every particular Church has the right to carry on mission work among pagan peoples. But pagan peoples are as a rule at a great distance from the Churches and one Church alone simply cannot carry on this all important and beautiful work. The obstacles and requirements are so many that individual Churches must cooperate in order to do anything at all as it ought to be done. Consequently, our Churches have agreed that their mission work should be regulated by the synodical gatherings of the Churches. Art. 51, let it be clear, does not say that only the denomination as such has the inherent right to carry on mission work. For practical reasons Art. 51 stipulates that the Churches in general through their Synods will regulate the mission work of the Churches. The Churches together can buy and sell, manage and supervise as no Church alone can do. For the progressive advancement of the work, the systematic occupation of a field, and the sound, Biblical establishment of Churches, denominational regulation is absolutely necessary.

But Art. 51 does not nullify the rights and duties of particular Churches. Neither does it nullify what has been clearly stated and regulated in other Arts of the Church Order. Thus, for example, Art. 4 and 5 clearly state that the calling to the ministry pertains to the particular or local Churches. The right to call and ordain men to the ministry is nowhere attributed to the major assemblies by the Church Order. Consequently, no major assembly should call a man to the ministry. And if, by common agreement, a Classis or Synod designates a Candidate or Minister for any particular work of the gospel ministry, then the actual call should proceed from a particular Church. And the relationship between the calling Church and the Minister concerned, in case he accepts the call, should be more than merely "official." We should not merely seek to satisfy "the letter of the law." The relationship between congregation and Minister should ever be real, vital, and active. Sham and mere form in matters spiritual and ecclesiastical are killing.¹⁸

In keeping with our commitments and convictions as URCNA, we desire that the engagement

¹⁷Van Dellen and Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary*, 1941: 140.

¹⁸Van Dellen and Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary*, 1941: 218-219.

and responsibility of the local church to its missionary remain fundamental – “real, vital and active.” At the same time, we “[recognize] the need of cooperation and [acknowledge] the authority of all the Churches working together through [broader] assemblies.” Our goal is to strike this balance.

URCNA Synod Escondido 2001 received the report entitled *Biblical and Confessional View of Missions* https://www.urnca.org/sysfiles/site_uploads/pubs/SL_pub3419_1.pdf (see pp. 101-114). In that report, one of our fundamental convictions as churches was articulated as follows:

A synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Synod of 1896, in calling our attention to the Great Commission, pointed out that the church as a whole does not baptize but only the locally instituted church. The synod does not disciple, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded" (*An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, J.H. Bavinck, p.59-60). This echoes the pattern of the New Testament church where missions was the task and responsibility of the local church.¹⁹

While seeking to highlight and emphasize our wholehearted agreement with this core understanding, we believe it is well that we also appreciate that throughout Reformed Church history the prevalent approach has always been a combination of local initiative and federational involvement, even at the Synod of Middelburg 1896. Whereas Acts 13:1-4 provides a Biblical instance of the local church of Antioch sending Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey, it's also important to notice from 2 Cor 8:19 and 23 that Titus and other missionary helpers are said to have been sent out by the *churches* plural.²⁰ Abraham Kuyper, whose influence marked the focus of Synod Middelburg 1896 on the responsibility of the local church, would also say:

“The authority and calling to do mission lies with every local church. Since individual churches are lacking in manpower and resources it is necessary that churches cooperate for this purpose. This cooperation should be organized not by way of a separate organization but through the regular ecclesiastical structures, and be subject to decisions made by the churches in their Synod.”²¹

2. The Missions Model of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Synod Wheaton 2018 (Art. 76.7) mandated the Missions Committee to investigate the current missions model of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. What follows is a brief description of the approach to foreign and domestic missions in the OPC, which views missions as the work of a united church.

It should be remembered that in 1933, due to his rejection of the liberal theology which the mainline Presbyterian church tolerated on the mission field, J. Gresham Machen formed the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. He was eventually suspended from the ministry for not breaking with the independent board – that suspension soon resulted in the formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (1936), which was equipped almost from the

¹⁹ URCNA *Minutes of Synod Escondido 2001*, p. 110

²⁰ Arjan de Visser in *Living Waters from Ancient Springs: Essays in Honor of Cornelius Van Dam*, 2011: 222.

²¹ Abraham Kuyper, *Refertaat*, 176. As cited and translated by de Visser, *op cit.*: 223.

very beginning with a missions committee of its own (1937). Since that time, the OPC has developed a robust mission's infrastructure that has helped their denomination remain unified, pro-active, responsible, and fruitful in their missionary endeavors. For the relatively small size of the denomination, the OPC has maintained a vigorous witness to the world – a witness that has not been hindered but greatly helped by their denominational coordination.

The OPC has two standing committees for missions– the Committee on Home Missions & Church Extension and the Committee on Foreign Missions. These committees are accountable to the General Assembly which elects fifteen men (9 ministers and 6 elders) to each – the members serve a 3-year term, open to reappointment. A “general secretary” and “associate general secretary” serve each committee; these four men are full-time employees of the OPC. The work of the two missions committees, together with the work of the Committee on Christian Education (which has its own general secretary), are voluntarily funded primarily through a combined budget known as “Worldwide Outreach” which is approved annually by the General Assembly of the OPC. Each congregation is requested to include Worldwide Outreach in its budget at a suggested per communicant rate.

A. Foreign Missions in the OPC

The OPC seeks not only the planting of indigenous Reformed congregations in foreign lands but also the establishment of indigenous presbyteries and denominations that are composed of mutually supporting congregations– by God's grace, this has been done in China, Ethiopia, Japan, Korea and Uganda. Seeing this great task as exceeding the means and scope of individual congregations and presbyteries in North America, the OPC erected the Committee on Foreign Missions (CFM) to oversee and conduct the work of foreign missions under the direction and control of the General Assembly for the most effective use of denominational resources in advancing the Kingdom.

The CFM meets twice each year; formulates policy in missions; provides instruction for the church in biblical missionary principles; proposes to General Assembly the opening and closing of all foreign fields; sends out missionary personnel and reviews their work; gives general administrative oversight to the work of all field missions and foreign missionaries (the appropriate presbytery/session retains the responsibility for the spiritual care and oversight of the missionary); approves the five-year plan of each field mission; and provides the majority of funding for the work of foreign missions. The missionaries, called or appointed to labor in a particular field, are organized into a field mission, which has on-the-ground direct oversight of the work of the missionaries, plans the work of the mission, reports annually on its work to the CFM, and provides mutual accountability and encouragement. Each such missionary is a full voting member of the field mission (though, only ordained presbyters can vote on ecclesiastical or theological matters). The OPC typically looks to have at least four missionary families present on any foreign field for the health and sustainability of the mission. The secretaries of the CFM will usually visit a foreign field at least once each year.

The CFM works with foreign missionaries by means of subcommittees that serve in an advisory capacity. A “field subcommittee” is responsible for monitoring the work of a particular mission field and advising the CFM concerning personnel, policies, problems, etc. There are also various

“operational subcommittees” that specialize in various areas of support for the missionaries (including new fields, candidates, admin/finance, and missionary training and care).

For foreign missionary personnel there is a detailed vetting process that involves multiple interviews – by the whole CFM, by their candidate’s committee, by a field sub-committee, the appropriate field mission and others. Missionaries on the foreign field send quarterly reports to the CFM, which are forwarded to the field sub-committee.

B. Domestic Missions in the OPC

The OPC has erected the Committee on Home Missions & Church Extension (CHM) in order to evangelize and extend the church in North America. Under the direction and control of the General Assembly, the CHM establishes policies and provides assistance to enable presbyteries and individual churches most effectively to carry out their responsibility in home missions. The work of the committee includes promoting home missions and evangelism throughout the denomination; assisting special evangelistic ministries and new churches; evaluating the progress of mission works; facilitating training and developmental programs; and providing financial aid for individual mission works and regional home missionaries. The whole CHM meets two times each year in person and once by conference call; its executive committee has an additional meeting. The CHM is served by a number of sub-committees (Church Planting Subcommittee; Ministry Operations Subcommittee, Finance Subcommittee; other special subcommittees are appointed as needed).

The CHM will have only partial oversight of church plants in North America, and only for that period of time while its funds are needed to supplement the local giving within a plant and the financial support of the presbytery to which the plant belongs. Church planting is primarily the work of the presbyteries, many of which have a regional home missionary who helps to establish church plants. Presbyteries hold ministerial credentials of church planting pastors, supply a home missions committee and an overseeing session for oversight of a church planter (in coordination with the CHM), and usually contribute some portion of funding for the plant and pastor. For the first four years of a church plant, the CHM will provide funds through a presbytery on a declining scale (up to 50% of total budget in first year) – increasing financial support for a plant will be needed from the presbytery and/or sponsoring churches of presbytery unless internal giving is sufficient; for special fields CHM aid may continue beyond four years. Regional home missionaries may receive financial aid from the CHM (up to 50% of total salary on a scale that does not decline). The CHM also oversees the OPC Loan Fund which provides loans to OPC churches for purchase of property and/or capital improvements.

Secretaries of the CHM will usually visit a home mission twice during the four-year span of financial support; phone calls are more frequent. Church planters and other mission personnel within a presbytery will submit monthly reports not only to their presbytery missions committee but also to the CHM, which may revoke financial support if church planters are delinquent in reporting.

Another important aspect of the OPC’s work in home missions and church extension is their internship program. When a year-long internship is specifically for the development of a church

planter, the home mission work providing the internship pays nothing for the funding of the man; the CHM and the Committee on Christian Education will jointly cover the whole cost. This allows the CHM to connect pastors/churches that have a proven record in church planting with prospective church planters, and to evaluate the work of those men before sending them into the mission field.

Notes on Mission Works

Foreign Missions:

- 15 foreign missionaries presently sent out.
- 7 medium term missionaries (1-3 years) presently on field.
- 105 short term mission workers sent in 2019.

Domestic Missions:

- 42 church plants in 2020
- Over the last 20 years 117 church plants have been planted and organized and 36 were closed.
- Many short-term teams.

Staff:

1) Foreign missions

- Two full-time Coordinators
- Two full-time secretaries

2) Domestic Missions:

- 2 Coordinators
- 8 Regional Home Missionaries
- 2 secretaries

Conclusion

The secretaries serving the two OPC missions committees will readily admit that their denomination can grow in various areas, from the vetting and training of personnel to the oversight and care given to missionaries. In the course of our research, a number of OPC brothers noted that in home missions they would like to see presbytery oversight augmented by the care of a sponsoring church/session; they very much appreciate that in the URCNA our church planters usually have a close relationship with their sending/overseeing Consistory.

This reveals a key difference between our two communions – the OPC enjoys broad denominational coordination (as it consciously views itself as on church) and shared oversight in mission work; the URCNA enjoys a more grassroots, local and organic approach. There are pros and cons on both sides, but insofar as our federation is looking to grow more active and effective in its missionary endeavors, we ought to consider how we might retain local connectivity and consistorial oversight/care yet also develop deeper trust and unity for greater cooperation, stewardship and effectiveness in missions.

It can be argued that the extensive infrastructure in OPC missions entails a great deal of bureaucracy and spending, things that are not at all appealing to us in the URCNA. But our federation should notice how that infrastructure translates into –(1) unified vision for the fulfillment of the Great Commission; (2) clear priorities which help in stewardship and long-term

effectiveness; (3) thorough training of missionaries and other missionary personnel; (4) amassing of institutional wisdom and expertise in missions; (5) ongoing promotion of missions/evangelism throughout the denomination; (6) broadened accountability for the greater care of missionaries and for the development of their work; (7) readiness in responding to mission opportunities and mobilizing people for the work; and (8) promotion of increased unity in the church through a sense of common ownership in the work of the whole church. Let's recognize that these are areas in which we need to grow, and that the OPC's mission model just might inform us of numerous ways in which we can become more faithful and fruitful in the work of missions, all to the glory of God.

3. A Brief History of Works in the URCNA

The Missions Committee has been tasked with coordinating URCNA missions and working with our sending churches and missionaries. We are very thankful for the privilege of serving in this way for the increase of Christ's kingdom. The fields truly are white for harvest.

As a committee we also have seen the struggles and difficulties in domestic and foreign missions. Our young federation is in need of more experience in missions; there is much to be learned. But many of our people seem to be unaware of our history so that there is a lack of appreciation for the distinct challenges we are facing. For this reason, we offer you a brief history of missions in the URCNA.

In preparation of our proposed plan, we asked for feedback not only from our churches and missionaries but also from former URCNA missionaries. Their responses were very helpful in identifying key areas where we have struggled and where we need to improve.

Overview of Missions

Since our birth, the federation has had a strong desire to be active in missions. In the beginning, missionaries that came out the Christian Reformed Church were called by local churches to serve in the URCNA. Over the years we have expanded in foreign and domestic fields. While many works have been attempted, there have been mixed results. Some were blessed by the Lord so that they could organize, but others eventually closed. Here are some of the pertinent numbers:

Domestic Missions:

- A. Church plants (or daughter churches) that have organized
 - 1. Grand Rapids, MI
 - 2. Apple Valley, CA
 - 3. Brea, CA (went to RPCNA)
 - 4. Oceanside, CA
 - 5. Santee, CA
 - 6. Pasadena, CA
 - 7. Twin Falls, ID
 - 8. Portland, OR
 - 9. Missoula, MT

10. Clovis, CA
 11. New York City, NY
 12. Des Moines, IA
 13. Sioux Falls, SD
 14. Rock Valley, IA
 15. Sioux Center, IA
 16. Brantford, ON
 17. Washington DC
 18. Cincinnati, OH
 19. Zeltenreich, PA
- B. Active mission works that have not yet organized: Ajax, ON
1. Regina, SK
 2. Scarborough, ON
 3. Jersey City, NJ
 4. Poconos, PA
 5. Colorado Springs, CO
 6. Big Springs, CA
 7. Gig Harbor, WA
 8. Vancouver, WA
 9. Chicago Heights, IL
 10. Ontario, CA
 11. St Catharines, ON
 12. Niagara Falls, ON
- C. 3 full-time ordained men working in theological training in US prisons (Divine Hope)
- D. 2 full-time, non-ordained men working in URC churches
- E. Church plants that were begun but did not continue:
1. Las Vegas, NV
 2. Rifle, CO
 3. Kauai, HI
 4. Boring, OR
 5. Hanford, CA
 6. Tinley Park, IL
 7. Prinsburg, MN
 8. Holland, MI
 9. Muskegon, MI
 10. Waterdown, ON
 11. Cambridge, MD
 12. Princess-Anne, MD
 13. Springfield, MO (*turned ARP*)

Foreign Missions:

- A. Active foreign fields that currently have a URC missionary:
1. Costa Rica
 2. Ecuador
 3. Honduras (presently looking for a long-term solution)
 4. Milan & Perugia, Italy
 5. Mexico
 6. Romania
- B. Missionaries living in the US but serving in theological training at home and abroad.
- 6 men working in MINTS International Seminary
- C. Mission works where missionaries were sent but subsequently pulled from the field:
1. Costa Rica
 2. India
 3. Philippines
 4. Trinidad
 5. Honduras (missionary associate)

General Observations

- 1) Our federation's commitment to missions is evident in the mission works that have been begun at home and around the world.
- 2) In Domestic church planting:
 - 19 churches have been planted and organized over the last 24 years.
 - A majority of mission works organized in the URCNA's first decade.
 - 13 mission works are active but not yet organized.
 - 12 church plants have closed; one other plant has moved from URC to ARP.
- 3) In Foreign Missions:
 - Two active fields have closed, bringing us from 8 fields to 6.
 - We have become increasingly engaged in theological education (7 full-time men).
 - We are having difficulty replacing numerous missionaries approaching retirement age.
 - We have few non-ordained men or women working as missionary associates.

Analysis

While we can rejoice over the various efforts that the Lord has blessed, the purpose of this report is to look responsibly at our history and to give due consideration to cases of failure. The high rate of closure in our mission works is not merely a matter of statistics – it means that the lives of numerous missionaries, their families and hundreds of congregants have been profoundly affected. As we consider how we might grow in missions, it is important to ask ourselves what lessons we should learn from those works that did not go well. Having been intimately involved in our mission works over the last several years, here are some conclusions that we have reached:

1. *Some consistories have done well in overseeing missionaries; others have been incapable of continuing for various reasons.*
 - For the most part oversight has often gone well for large churches that have the resources, strong leadership, and the manpower to do the work.
 - Many churches have admitted that the job was beyond their scope of expertise so that they were overwhelmed by the work of overseeing a mission –
 - In some of foreign fields, visitation was very sporadic (e.g. once in ten years).
 - Personnel change in Councils or JVCs have impeded continuity in oversight.
 - Long-term commitment has been difficult to maintain in certain fields.
 - Several churches, after attempting to send a missionary to a field and failing, have expressed their reluctance to try again. Multiple classes have the money and the desire to plant, but the churches are either willing or unable to oversee.

2. *Some missionaries have thrived under our present system; others have suffered injury, both personally and professionally.*
 - A number of former URC missionaries made it clear that they were disappointed by the way their mission work was ended; it has had a profound effect on them.
 - Missionaries approaching retirement have difficulty finding new places to serve.
 - All former missionaries that commented on the proposed mission plan were enthusiastic about the changes.
 - The URC has no plan to help missionaries needing financial support in their retirement – a matter that is often beyond the scope of the local church.

3. *When a field has been closed (largely due to the lack of long-term planning), those attending the mission work were adversely affected.*
 - In some fields, this was done without consultation with the missionary on the field.
 - This process has sometimes been very quickly (months or even weeks) without full consideration of the long-term effects on the missionary or on those he served.

4. *Our ecumenical relations with other churches and our witness to the world have been seriously affected by conflicts/division that are not properly addressed and resolved.*
 - The Missions Committee has received numerous communications from multiple countries regarding the relationship between our missionaries and those of other Reformed denominations.
 - Divisions on the field have adversely affected the ministries of other NAPARC churches.

5. *There are many opportunities in missions that we are missing as a federation.*
 - At the present time, we have very few opportunities for non-ordained people to serve as missionary associates.
 - Many URC youth are serving in short-missions with other NAPARC

churches, evangelical churches, or in the CRC.

- Numerous men who started their training or ministry within the URC have moved on to work with other denominations due to the absence of ministry “on-ramps” and places to serve.

Conclusion

This history of missions in the URCNA reveals more than merely the results of our efforts. It is also a record of our progress in unity, in brotherly love, and in our witness to a watching world. The desire of the Missions Committee is to learn from above statistics so that we might not only provide our churches with policies that would help us continue in the blessings that we have experienced, but also acknowledge and correct our mistakes. Just as the slightest error with a compass can steer a ship way off course, so any variance from sound Biblical principles and practices in missions can greatly affect our churches now and in the future. To this end, we ask that you consider this report with much care, and pray for the Lord to guide our churches by His Word and Spirit.

Based on our research, we propose the following areas of improvement for our cooperation in missions as URCNA churches.

C. Increased Cooperation through strengthening Classical Accountability

One area for growth in a cooperative URCNA missions model can take place through the greater involvement of the classis in the work of missions.

In our current Church Order, the classis plays an essential role in the mutual support and accountability of local congregations. Classis generally meets twice a year, and at each meeting questions are answered through credentials to ensure ongoing faithfulness in the local church. Church Visitors are commissioned by each classis to aid local congregations in their work and witness. Should any church so desire, advice can be sought through the classis for a variety of pastoral, ecumenical, and missional matters. We give this authority to the classis because we believe that in these actions we preserve fellowship and manifest our unity in Christ (Church Order, Art. 24).

As churches in the URCNA, we have covenanted together to, “Assist each other in the support of [our] missionaries” (Church Order, Art. 47). We want to recognize that the support we pledge to one another in missions needs to go beyond finances and include the support of prayer, wisdom, and even direction. To that end, we would like to see a strengthening of the role of the classis in the work of missions, and therefore recommend a change (italicized portion below) to Art. 47 of our Church Order –

Art. 47 – The Church’s Mission Calling

The church’s missionary task is to preach the Word of God to the unconverted. When this task is to be performed beyond the field of an organized church, it is to be carried out by ministers of the Word set apart to this labor, who are called, supported and supervised by their Consistories. *A local Consistory shall seek the concurring advice of*

Classis before sending or removing a missionary from a field. The churches should assist each other in the support of their missionaries.

Rationale:

1. Sending a man to the foreign field requires significant thought and consideration, as outlined in our federation's Foreign Missions Manual. Such a move should commit the federation to ministry in an area of the world for a considerable period of time, and thus should be taken with a broad level of consideration and support for the mission in question.
2. Sending a man to begin a new work domestically should be done with the advice and awareness of the classis (*How to Plant*, p. 9). Moving forward in local church planting and evangelism in a united and coordinated fashion broadens the support and planning behind a new endeavour.
3. Removing a missionary from a field (foreign or domestic) has significant consequences for the missionary and the church/field where he has served. Requiring the concurring advice of Classis protects both the missionary and the field that we, as a federation, have supported. This Church Order change would be in line with other areas of the Church Order where a minister's call cannot be changed without the input of the classis (e.g. Art. 11)
4. Supplementing existing works should be done only after careful consideration of the merits and needs of the field. This step ensures an extra level of godly encouragement and accountability that will help us make wise decisions in our missionary endeavours.
5. The inclusion of this line before the statement, "The churches should assist each other in the support of their missionaries," presents the advice of Classis in a positive light. While concurring advice must be sought, the goal of that advice is mindful of the fact that the churches should assist one another in supporting missionaries.
6. "Concurring advice" rather than "advice" is recommended because the starting of a field closely follows any major change in a man's calling and the inclusion of a new congregation in the federation. The declaration of candidacy, ordination, suspension, deposition, release from a local church and emeritation all require the concurring advice of classis. A new church entering the URCNA requires the concurring advice of both Classis and Synod. Therefore, it would be inconsistent with the practice in our present church order to call a man to a new field or remove him from a field where he has an official call without the same benefit of classical concurring advice.

We would recommend that the churches of the federation support an overture to change Art. 47 of the church order as suggested above. However because this recommendation depends upon an overture, we do not put this forward as an official, numbered recommendation of the committee. The grounds for change and the corresponding determination of the Synod will be handled through discussing the merits (or demerits) of any overture given in this regard.

D. Domestic Church Planting

For our missionary efforts within the United States and Canada, we propose the following:

RECOMMENDATION 4: That the federation divide the current committee to create two committees, namely the URCNA Domestic Missions Committee and the URCNA Foreign Missions Committee, each having one delegate from each Classis, the descriptions of which are found in Appendix One.

Grounds:

1. The URCNA Missions Committee would be greatly aided by the ability to divide its focus.
2. It is difficult to function as a committee of 16-17 members.
3. The work of domestic and foreign missions can be better served with committees focused to the specific task.
4. The opportunities and challenges of the foreign field vary greatly from those of the domestic field.
5. Of the denominations assigned to us to research and learn from, both had separate committees for foreign and domestic work.
6. Overlap of work (such as the Trumpet and Prayer Calendar) would be shared by the two committees.

RECOMMENDATION 5: That the federation create a full time Domestic Missions Coordinator position, the description of which is found in Appendix One. The current Missions Coordinator would become the Foreign Missions Coordinator.

Grounds:

1. In researching the models of missions assigned to us by the Synod, we found that both models recognized the importance of full-time secretaries who can serve the churches with a focus upon either the foreign or domestic work of missions.
2. A Domestic Missions Coordinator (DMC) will help divide the labor and allow the Missions Committee to do its work in a way that balances the needs of both the foreign and domestic field.
3. A Domestic Missions Coordinator (DMC) will be able to aid churches who may need help in revitalization, which is currently beyond the spectrum of a single Missions Coordinator.
4. A DMC could help in providing training and discipleship to church planters and pastors as requested.

RECOMMENDATION 6: That Synod implement a procedure for the nomination of the Domestic Missions Coordinator which will follow the procedure the federation adopted for calling our present coordinator.

Ground:

1. The process has already been approved by the Synod for nominations to the current Missions Coordinator position.

RECOMMENDATION 7: That each Classis be encouraged by Synod to have a Classical Committee on Domestic Missions (CCDM) whose mandate and composition will be determined by the classis in light of the following guiding principles:

- (a) that every 3 years each CCDM conscientiously investigates areas within its geographic bounds where a URCNA church might be planted, and then makes recommendations to the classis. These recommendations should be shared with Synod through the report of the Synodical Domestic Missions Committee for greater accountability and encouragement;
- (b) that the classis take seriously the pastoral care and encouragement of its church planters so that there is a mutual accountability and stimulation of effort between the classis and the churches overseeing church planters;
- (c) that the CCDM be involved in giving advice to classis in sending or removing a missionary from the domestic field (as required in the proposed changes to Art. 47).
- (d) that the CCDM utilize broader connections within the classis and work with the URCNA Domestic Missions Committee to involve additional workers in the field as necessary (e.g. missionary assists; interns).

Grounds:

1. Classical Committees on Domestic Missions will help us avoid the unwieldy bureaucracy feared by many in our federation, as these committees are by nature closer to the churches and more accountable to them.
2. The CCDMs will accommodate the diversity of thought and practice in church planting that currently exists within the federation.
3. Such committees would help us as Classes to be proactive both in church planting and in the practical care of our church planters. This would encourage a joint commitment to evangelism and church planting within each respective Classis.
4. Such committees could greatly improve our cooperation in missions on a domestic level.

RECOMMENDATION 8: That each Classical Committee on Domestic Missions make recommendations to its classis for two Mission Visitors (who could be Church Visitors of that classis) who can be called upon, as necessary, to aid in the resolution of conflict between missionaries and their overseeing Consistory.

Ground:

- The Missions Coordinator has often been asked to help resolve conflict on various mission fields. This has put him in a difficult position, since his advice can easily alienate one party or the other in the conflict. The goal here is to provide each classis with particular agents who can help in carrying this burden in times of difficulty.

We would include military chaplains under the recommendations above. While chaplains are distinct from a standard domestic missionary/church-planter their work overlaps in many regards. We would like to see chaplains treated as domestic missionaries, functioning under their consistories with involvement from committees and the classis as determined wise by the

sending church in consultation with the churches of their classis.

E. Foreign Missions

1. Background

At Synod Escondido (2001) the URCNA adopted the Joint Venture Model of missions. This model has been helpful, and exhibits numerous principles and practices that we wish to retain. A description of this model can be found in Appendix 2 of this report. Joint Venture Committees typically handle the following:

- administration for a particular mission work
- establishing priorities
- establishing a budget
- defining the principles and standards by which missionaries will be evaluated
- encouraging prayer by keeping supporting congregations aware of needs
- encouraging missionary zeal in the congregations by way of education and hands on involvement with the mission work
- informing each Consistory of the missionary's progress, successes, challenges and prayer needs²²

We note that this model, which has been used across the federation since 2001, allows consistories to entrust administrative oversight for missions to a committee composed of men from the sending church and other supporting churches. Considering developments, struggles, and failings we have experienced in missions over the last two decades, we believe it wise to retain the essence of the Joint Venture model, but also to augment that approach with greater cooperation on classical and synodical levels. Such a merger was a great strength of the Christian Reformed Church's approach in previous generations and is currently what helps the OPC to be so effective in missions. A combining of these concepts maintains the close involvement of local churches in the work of missions, borrows from an already approved URCNA system, and strengthens the support from and submission to the churches of the federation as we move forward in our missionary endeavours. We would emphasize that this approach would be optional, just as with the current Joint Venture Committee model of missions is optional for our churches. Those that feel they could benefit from the model described below could take full advantage of it. Churches that would like to continue with their current oversight approach would not be pressured to change or in any way be characterized as delinquent.

Having carefully considered the feedback that churches gave us regarding our original proposal, we have amended the model for foreign missions that we are now presenting to Synod in a small way. We continue to maintain that, particularly in our efforts on the foreign field, there is great benefit to having consistories utilize a broader body of wise and experienced advisors than is typically found in a local church. Moreover, as a federation we want to strengthen our foreign fields by sending more than one man to each. Our goal is not merely to plant a single church in a foreign country but to create a strong gospel witness with multiple Reformed congregations that

²² Minutes of Synod Escondido, p.113 2.c.

can give mutual support to one another. But when a field has multiple missionaries called and overseen by different consistories, in the nature of the case such a foreign field will require classical and/or synodical involvement for the sake of united vision and most effective labor (cf. Church Order, Art. 25). The only way around classical and/or synodical involvement in such a foreign field is to make the entirely unreasonable demand that a single Consistory call and oversee multiple missionaries. Our hope is that our foreign fields might be strengthened with multiple missionaries, sent from multiple churches that cooperate with each other in an organized manner for the benefit of the mission, and ultimately for the glory of God.

Our initial proposal for foreign missions presented an integrated structure wherein subcommittees of the URCNA Missions Committee would have representation from sending churches (in addition to men from the synodical committee) to give administrative oversight to the mission. Based on the feedback from the churches, and in light of our history of general distrust toward committees (particularly on the synodical level), we are now proposing something of a hybrid that combines the Joint Venture Committee model with classical involvement. We also encourage the adoption of a foreign field by each classis so that it might focus its attention and resources on building up the witness of the church abroad. When there is a request from the overseeing Consistory or obvious need due to the growth of a particular foreign mission, the classis will create its own committee to help *only* with matters that are beyond the purview of a single consistory or that pertain to the churches in common. Such committees and the delineation of their duties are described below.

2 Classical Committees on Foreign Missions

The Classical Committee on Foreign Missions would serve as a standing committee, accountable to its classis, that would work hand in hand with a Field Team (composed of the mission personnel on the field itself). Currently, most of our foreign mission works are so underdeveloped (a solo missionary and his family) that a field team could not take shape. However, we have drafted this proposal in light of our federative mission goals, which include the creation of a sustainable, multi-church witness in each foreign field where we work. The establishment of field teams is a way to recognize the authority, knowledge, experience and spiritual vitality of our brothers and sisters who labor on the field. We do not want to circumvent either the office-bearers of a sending church or the office-bearers and missionary helpers present in the foreign field.

A Classical Committee on Foreign Missions would regularly interact with its foreign missionary and/or a foreign Field Team, and would give periodic reports to the classis and any other churches involved in the mission work. These classical committees would be organized as follows:

1. Representation

- a. Members of the committee would come from the several cooperating churches for a defined term, and would be appointed by the various consistories of said churches (office-bearers or lay members who have notable experience/competence in foreign missions).
- b. We would recommend:

- at least two representatives per sending church (including, if possible, a deacon);
- one representative from each church interested in being involved;
- at large members from churches outside the classis (these are people who can contribute meaningfully to a given field);
- the classical representative on the Synodical Foreign Missions Committee;
- the Missions Coordinator in an advisory (non-voting) capacity.

2. Officers – each year the committee would elect the following special officers:

- a. Chairman
- b. Clerk
- c. Treasurer

3. Functions & Tasks of the Classical Committee on Foreign Missions:

A Classical Committee on Foreign Missions would work closely with sending consistories and the Field Team to carry out administrative oversight for the mission. Major decisions of the committee would be submitted for review to the sending Consistory and the classis prior to implementation. The CCFM would have a broader focus upon the operation and direction of the mission, whereas the sending consistory would have narrower focus upon the missionary both for his own personal work, spirituality, and the care of his family. The primary tasks of a CCFM would include the following:

- a. giving advice regarding personnel: namely the expanding or closing of a field including the involvement of more missionaries, missionary helpers, or interns;
- b. establishing priorities for the field, and striving to broaden support in the classis for the growth of the mission;
- c. helping the overseeing Consistory in planning and implementing furloughs;
- d. establishing a budget for the mission field (in cooperation with sending Consistories)²³;
- e. working with sending churches to define the standards by which the mission will be evaluated;
- f. praying and encouraging prayer for the mission throughout classis;
- g. informing the churches of the federation regarding the mission's progress, successes, challenges, and needs through representation on the appropriate synodical missions committee.

4. Tasks of the Sending Consistory:

²³ What we envision here is that while the sending church remains the one who sets the salary and budget for their missionary, a time should come in the work of a mission where further costs and support are required (for publishing, schooling, hospitals, etc.) which would take elements of the budget beyond the purview of a local Consistory. In such cases, the advice of Classis through this committee would be wise.

- a. oversight of the life and doctrine of the missionary and/or missionary helper;
- b. establishing a budget for the missionary
- c. pastoral care of the missionary, missionary helper, and family members through regular communication, participation in field visits, and care during furloughs;
- d. oversight of the souls connected to the mission church in cases where there is only one missionary present and the mission work does not yet have a Consistory.

The Classical Committee on Foreign Missions functions practically in a way that is very similar to the functioning of a Joint Venture Committee. A significant difference would be the inclusion of members from the URCNA Missions Committee (or from the Synodical Foreign Missions Committee, should synod establish one) to increase cooperation and unity in missions at both a classical and synodical level.

Should a sending Consistory not desire help from its classis in their missionary endeavours, it would be within its prerogative to engage in mission work on its own or by means of a Joint Venture Committee.

5. Classical Focus

Our hope is that each classis of the federation would in time have their own foreign field. Currently, these are the classes with foreign mission works involving an ordained man:

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Classis Central US: | Rev. Landazuri (Ecuador) |
| Classis Ontario-East: | Rev. Langendoen (Honduras) |
| | Rev. Van Dyken (Mexico) |
| Classis Michigan: | Rev. Green (Costa Rica) |
| Classis Southwestern US: | Rev. Brown (Italy) |
| | Rev. Corcea (Romania) |
| | Rev. Ferrari (Italy) |
| Classis Western Canada | Rev. Folkerts (Uganda) |

We do not wish in any way to disrupt the good relationships between calling churches and their missionaries through a new program, and we fully recognize that the work of the church is first and foremost relational, and only secondarily (or less) a matter of policy. We further acknowledge that some churches may wish to be involved with and even send missionaries to a field that is not the specific focus of their classis. With this awareness, we have included “at large” members on a Classical Committee on Foreign Missions which, again, allows such committees to function very much like a Joint Venture Committee by including representation from beyond a given classis. However, the recommendations of a CCFM would still go to the calling consistory and/or designated classis, when necessary, for consideration. The major goal here is for the classis adopting a specific field to invest their time and energy in making wise decisions, through their churches, for the prosperity of the mission field.

We recognize also that new mission opportunities arise all the time from all over the world. Those classes without foreign missionaries sent from them can cooperate with other churches or consider new fields for involvement. Our synodical Missions Committee has numerous fields that have been served by the URCNA in the recent past and could be resumed by an interested church/classis. Of course, any classis is able to consider a new field that needs the gospel.

RECOMMENDATION 9: That Synod encourage the general implementation of Classical Committees for Foreign Missions.

Grounds given with Recommendation 11, below

RECOMMENDATION 10: That Synod encourage the URCNA Missions Committee (Foreign) to contact sending churches to determine if there is interest in creating a Classical Committee on Foreign Missions that can aid in serving their particular field according to the parameters given above. Where interest exists, the URCNA Missions Committee will work with the sending church to write proposals to their respective Classis to establish a Classical Committee for Foreign Missions within the Classis.

Grounds given with Recommendation 11, below

RECOMMENDATION 11: That Synod encourage the URCNA Missions Committee to contact Classes without any representation on the foreign field with ideas of how they can be involved in strengthening current fields (through cooperation with another Classis and representation on their CCFM) or re-establishing contact with potentially viable foreign fields that have been closed in the last 10 years.

Grounds for Recommendations 9-11 (re: Classical Committees on Foreign Missions):²⁴

1. **Guidance and Coordination:** It may be advisable, due to the sheer weight of responsibility, that a local council utilize a Classical Committee on Foreign Missions. In a multitude of counselors one finds wisdom and guidance (Proverbs 15:22, 20:18, 24:6). We can also better organize and coordinate the assistance and support of our missionaries, in terms of developing mission policies and actions for the field, with a broader body of representatives. Such a body could also help to develop the field wisely, while being aware of the broader goal and commitment of missions within the federation.
2. **Participation:** This model continues to provide a more "hands on" approach to missions, but it does not require a sending Consistory to carry the burden of administration in order to become meaningfully involved in the work of foreign missions. It should encourage closer and more direct relationships between churches and missionaries, and maintain the shared sense of responsibility in the work of missions both classical and federational. Further, this model does not prevent churches within the federation, regardless of geographical proximity, to cooperate regarding the various mission fields within the URCNA. We believe this federation-wide support, combined with the ongoing and particular involvement of local churches (through the classis), increases

²⁴ The grounds listed here borrow from and expand the grounds given for the Joint Venture Model as found in the Minutes of Synod Escondido.

the opportunity for meaningful participation in mission among all our churches. Finally, this also allows churches to participate who are unable to call and send a missionary on their own due to financial or manpower limitations. Within this model smaller congregations could still serve as sending churches without fearing that they would be overwhelmed by administrative oversight of the field.

3. **Stewardship:** This model provides a more efficient use of resources (e.g. time and money) as it allows us to focus on saturating various mission fields for the cause of Christ, and to provide greater federational support to our fields so that they are not opened and closed at the sole discretion of a sending Consistory. Under this model, the federation accepts greater responsibility for its mission fields.
4. **Strengthened Relations:** Broader cooperation among the churches of the federation strengthens relationships among our churches and strengthens the expression of unity in our various mission works.
5. **Biblical Precedent:** The Holy Spirit commissioned Saul and Barnabas from the congregation in Syrian Antioch to go to the mission field (Acts 13:1-3). However, in Paul's ministry he showed himself accountable to many congregations – Antioch (Acts 14:26-28); Ephesus (Acts 20:17ff); Jerusalem (Acts 21:17-19).
6. **Safe Guard:** A Classical Missions Committee diffuses responsibility for the administration of a mission field among a broader body of individuals and churches, and would involve those with missions experience and knowledge to work closely with those on the field without excluding the local church. Such an arrangement allows for a greater pool of knowledge, and would necessarily help new members learn about missions at a quicker rate as they work alongside individuals with experience. Further, Classical Committees on Foreign Missions cannot become autonomous. The local church still calls and oversees life and doctrine, and no missionary (or missionary helper) is sent to or removed from a field without the concurring advice of Classis (according to the proposed change in C.O. Art. 47), which must be sought not by the classical committee but by a sending Consistory within that classis.
7. **Prevention:** This not only prevents the committee from having a "life of its own," but also ensures that our missionaries and mission works receive a broader base of support and guidance in their work, hopefully preventing burnout and many other pitfalls on the mission field.
8. **Avoiding and Responding to Conflict:** The URCNA has generally agreed to strengthen missions fields, and to work towards team-based missions on the foreign field. When this happens, however, it should mean that multiple churches will have missionaries in a single field. This model clearly delineates the responsibility of each consistory (as outlined above), while allowing broader administrative matters to be handled by a broader classical body. Further, should conflict arise between missionaries on the field or between a missionary and his sending church, there is a body familiar with the mission who can help make decisions and work in trouble situations.
9. **Proper Order within the Churches:** In our study of the older CRC model of missions, we saw that the CRC recognized that as mission works grow in the foreign field the oversight of that field extends beyond the parameters of a local Consistory and becomes a matter of concern that pertains to the churches of the broader assembly in common. This language is still found in Article 25 of our Church Order, and shows that continental Reformed church polity has historically recognized a time where the work

of missions requires help from the broader assembly.

F. MISSIONARIES IN EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES

Our Reformed churches have been blessed with a rich and faithful theological tradition. One of the great assets of our federation is found in the careful study and exposition of the Scriptures. Recognizing the importance of “rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), we have seen a number of URCNA churches and missionaries serving the broader church through educational ministries.

These educational ministries (including but not limited to the work of MINTS, Divine Hope, and Redemption Prison Ministries) have historically been termed “extraordinary missions” within our federation. This label has been applied because, in accord with our Church Order, “The church’s missionary task is to preach the Word of God to the *unconverted*” (Art. 47). Missionaries working with educational ministries do not generally focus upon the unconverted directly, but their work is part of the broader mission work of the church and deserves the support of the federation. Those involved in such ministries take the riches we have in Christ, and use them to strengthen the church in its manifold expressions around the world so that the gospel will ultimately reach many more unbelievers.

As we consider the role of our extraordinary missionaries working in educational ministries, we make the following observations:

- Such men need to be and are currently called and overseen by local consistories.
- The work of Divine Hope, MINTS, Redemption Prison Ministries and other such organizations is overseen administratively by their own organizational boards.
- Usually these ministries will not be exclusively URCNA but are missionary efforts that combine gifts, manpower, and accountability with other like-minded Reformed and Presbyterian churches.
- Men involved with MINTS span a broad geographic spectrum within the URCNA, and have historically had calling churches in at least 3 of our Classes. Their focus is primarily on the foreign field.
- Men involved with Divine Hope Reformed Bible Seminary have historically had calling churches within Classis Central U.S. Their focus is in prisons within the United States.
- Our pastor involved with Redemption Prison Ministries has his calling church within Classis Western Canada. Their focus is in prisons in Canada.
- We have many ordained ministers functioning with a specific, educational focus. Others in this realm teach in seminaries including but not limited to Mid-America Reformed Seminary and Westminster Seminary California. Such men have historically not been considered missionaries (educational or otherwise) within the URCNA.

Recognizing the oversight structures already in place for these ministries, we suggest the following:

RECOMMENDATION 12: That Synod adopt the following as pastoral advice to the churches.

- a. That educational missionaries with a domestic focus (e.g. Divine Hope, Redemption Prison Ministries) be adopted by the classis in which they operate, and that these classes see how they can best serve these men and their calling churches in a way that fits the needs of each particular situation. The synodical committees would be happy to help in giving advice should it be requested.
- b. That other extraordinary missionaries sent by URC consistories, though not considered here, approach the Missions Committee to develop guidelines, so that they are not neglected within the support structures of the federation regarding the work of missions.
- c. That men engaged in such ministry be recognized under Art. 47 of the Church Order, and therefore have the advice of their classis before accepting such a position as a URCNA missionary. We make this recommendation due to the weighty responsibility of those who would take on teaching in this capacity, and as it helps the classis to own and support its educational missionaries in a proper and encouraging way.
- d. If so desired, classis can appoint a man serving in this capacity to be their representative for the Synodical Committee on Foreign or Domestic Missions.

Grounds:

1. See the notes made in the bullet points above.
2. The diversity of oversight structures within educational missions makes it difficult to give advice that would apply across the board.

G. Opportunity for National, Federational Mission Funds

Our encouragement towards national, federational mission funds is not intended to be a general fund through which all missionary and church planter salaries and budgets are paid. We believe that sending churches should continue to collect, manage, and distribute funds for their missionaries through their local deaconates.

However, we believe there is still a great need for a general federational missions fund. Interested individuals and businesses have approached our committee expressing a desire to give donations that would promote and aid the work of URCNA missions in a general fashion (i.e. not be given all to one church, or all to one mission). Further, we desire to be much more proactive in missions so that funds could be used for the following:

- internships for potential church planters and missionaries;
- training for current and future church planters and missionaries;
- investigating potential fields and visiting current fields;
- helping missions, missionaries, and missionary helpers during furloughs;
- supplementing the financial aid that classes give to their mission works.

Calling churches would continue to receive funds for their missionaries, and pay them as usual. The goal of this fund would simply be to allow for general giving to URCNA missions in a way that would provide funds for all sorts of responsible development and expansion in missions.

Thus, churches that opt out of the plan would not be affected by decreased giving and yet could still benefit in various ways from the monies given to the general fund (see below).

Because our federation exists in both the US and Canada, we would suggest that each nation has its own fund to be used for works within each nation. However, we have been encouraged to learn that the United Reformed Church in Lethbridge has recently created URMA (the United Reformed Missionary Association) as a legitimate, legally approved vehicle through which ministries outside of Canada can be overseen by Canadians in a way that allows Canadian financial support to reach gospel ministry in the US and abroad. We would recommend that both Canada and the US create their respective mission funds, that they function primarily within their own nation, and that URMA be utilized as a tool through which specific projects (an internship, a youth summer camp, a building project) could be supported with Canadian involvement.²⁵

To help ensure the right use of funds given for federational missions, and to avoid any potential misuse of funds, we would recommend that monies collected below a certain dollar amount be designated for training, internships, investigation of fields, furloughs, supplemental start-up aid, etc.; and that monies collected above said dollar amount be distributed equally to the classes for the ongoing financial support of the mission works within their Classis.

RECOMMENDATION 13: That Synod approve the concept of two national Missions Funds as outlined above, and task committees (one for the U.S. and one for Canada) with financial knowledge in their respective nation to explore the potential establishment of these funds and report back to the next Synod for final consideration by the churches.

Grounds:

1. There have been repeated communications which have come to the Missions Committee from members who wish to donate funds that would promote all URCNA Missions in general, rather than going to a specific URCNA mission work.
2. The fund would allow for a more pro-active approach to investigating potential new fields for mission work, and thus promote a more intentional, pro-active approach to expanding Christ's kingdom through URCNA missions.
3. The tasks outlined above do not infringe upon the authority or work of local consistories.
4. Discussion of financial legalities on the floor of Synod are difficult. At past Synods this has led to sufficient confusion to kill concepts while legalities were still uncertain. We know we are *not* a committee gifted in financial details and legalities, but felt it would be premature to ask others to investigate this before having the endorsement of Synod on the concept.

H. Diaconal Missions and the URCNA

In the research assigned to us from Classis Wyoming 2018, we came to the realization that both the older CRC model of missions as well as the OPC model involved diaconal/deed branches of

²⁵ Please note that the focus here upon Canadian funds and giving is only in light of different tax laws between Canada and the U.S. In the United States an organization of this nature is not required due to different laws governing charitable organizations.

missionary work.²⁶ As a URCNA, we do not yet have a diaconal branch for missions. However, Reformed Mission Services is a parachurch ministry that is overseen by its own board, yet is composed of URCNA people and largely utilized by URCNA congregations/individuals for helping with disaster relief, mission projects, diaconal efforts, and training in evangelism.

Recognizing the importance of gospel witness being expressed through both word and deed, and having an appreciation of the work of RMS to date, we propose the following:

RECOMMENDATION 14: That Synod recognize RMS (Reformed Mission Services) as a partner organization that can be used, as needed, in disaster relief, mission projects, diaconal efforts, and training in evangelism for the strengthening of URCNA missions.

Grounds:

1. RMS is an independent, non-profit (501c3) corporation, under the spiritual oversight of the Consistory of Trinity URC in Caledonia, MI.
2. RMS is an accredited member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) that has strict accountability standards to be met.
3. RMS adheres to the truths of Scripture summarized in the Three Forms of Unity (Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort) and in the Westminster Standards.
4. All Board members and employees ascribe to these truths and are asked annually to sign a Code of Ethics form.
5. The RMS Administrative Director is an elder-qualified male in good standing of an RMS member church.
6. RMS's standards and practices fit within the doctrinal standards of our federation as outlined in our confessions.
7. RMS is doing a good job of showing the love of God in practical ways around the world.

I. How This New Plan Would Help Our Federation

1. This new plan will help us start new mission works. Because so much work is involved in starting new mission works, local churches are often hesitant to take this upon themselves. We have classes where the desire, funding and personnel are available, yet there are no consistories willing or able to begin a work. By having the help of classical committees, finances from a URCNA fund, and the backing of synodical missions' committees, local churches should be much more inclined to call and send missionaries.
2. This new plan will relieve consistories of the burden of providing sole oversight if they desire help in this way. Many of our sending churches have been overwhelmed in the ongoing work of overseeing a missionary and/or a mission field; some have concluded the work, deeming themselves incapable of continuing. In this new plan, the local Consistory would retain oversight of its

²⁶ These branches of mission are still utilized by many within the URCNA, particularly as our senior members work to rebuild homes in devastated neighbourhoods through World Renew, a diaconal branch of the Christian Reformed Church.

missionary's doctrine and life while having the opportunity to share administrative field oversight with a classical committee.

3. This new plan will broaden accountability and support in missions, while retaining more intimate relationships between missionaries and their sending churches. What we have learned from other NAPARC denominations is that a close, personal connection between a missionary and his overseeing body is often lacking – we have been advised not to lose this in our federation. We have also seen historically within the URCNA that we recognize consistories sometimes need outside help (as evidenced in the Joint Venture Committee model of Synod Escondido) to help in oversight. We have further seen in our history since 2001 that we can handicap ourselves by keeping all oversight in a single Consistory. The “team approach” that we propose should greatly enhance our federation's vision, direction and cooperation in missions.
4. This plan will allow missions to be “field-driven” by giving missionaries an active voice in committees. The local church, missionaries, and broader missions committees will be in regular communication to help plan and guide our mission works.
5. This new plan will help the federation to develop the kind of infrastructure needed to attract men to URCNA missions and to mobilize them for ministry. Over the last few years we have seen several of our men (missionaries, seminary students, and others interested in missions) leave the URC to serve in other NAPARC communions. We have also witnessed men from outside our federation express initial interest in the URC only to move on due to our having no church body ready to train, mobilize and support them in mission work. Our lack of missionary vision, infra-structure, and on-ramps is profoundly hurting our federation's contribution to the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

J. Conclusion

We believe this plan will greatly increase missional activity, cooperation, and accountability among our churches, while remaining within the bounds of our current Church Order. It should also bring to our churches much greater awareness of the federation's missions. Moreover, as Classical committees work with the synodical missions committees, the big picture of URCNA missions will be better understood and more wisely advanced. The new plan maintains very healthy local Consistory/church involvement (not limiting the current rights or responsibilities of the local church in any way); even so, it gives the local church the option of participating, and recognizes the diversity between classes. For those who wish to take part, the new structure should increase the mission activity of smaller URC congregations, as they recognize they do not need to have the funds and personnel of a large congregation in order to send/support a missionary. The close links through the Classis allows for the work to be carried out in a context of strong relational support; you are working in missions with those you see more often from within the federation.

It is our earnest hope that this proposal will be blessed of God for the advancement of our missional task to the greater glory of God!

Signatories of the Majority Report:

Rich Anjema
Jared Beard
Harry Bout
Rich Bout
John Bouwers
Greg Bylsma
Casey Freswick
Steve Howerzyl
Duane Konynenbelt
Jody Lucero
Paul Murphy
Tom Morrison

V. Recommendations for Growing Together in Missions – Minority Report

The Collegial Model for URCNA Missions

Missions Committee Minority Report to Synod 2020

The undersigned, a minority of the Missions Committee which does not agree with the majority, desire to express their views in conflict with recommendations #4-13, 15-16 (We have no issue with recommendations #1-3, 14) and substitute them with 4 recommendations below. We see an alternate way to unify our federation and improve the support of our missionaries without hiring another Missions Coordinator, splitting the Synodical Missions Committee, creating Classical Domestic and Foreign oversight committees and creating Supervised Central Funds. We pray this report will improve our discussion as a federation and not divide us. The strong statements we make are not meant to cause offense but to expose our weaknesses so that we can grow stronger.

Background:

A minority on the committee has been endeavoring to work with the majority, but we are unable to comprehend how the majority plan will practically work, nor do we see how it properly addresses the churches' feedback. Many churches who responded to the five proposals, particularly those with experience in overseeing missionaries described their strong reservations (*note for the purposes of this report, the term missionary will include foreign and domestic church planters and those who work in parachurch settings*). The ramifications of the majority's recommendations are tremendous; this minority report seeks to highlight some key reservations we have. Beyond doubling administration costs are the hundreds of hours spent in new meetings, the oversight burden of a new full-time position, the travel time and the multiplication of reports to synodical agendas. While churches may opt out, introducing diversity in how fields are overseen carries with it some unintended consequences too. At the end of the day, we questioned whether the investments being suggested would even help our missionaries? It seems we are trying to supervise our churches and missionaries when they are not asking for that. We

see a more gracious way to unify our churches, by putting into practice our Lord's commission to the seventy to go out "two by two." We have much to gain as a federation by doing so! After intensive collaboration with elders, pastors, and missionaries, we urge you to consider the following.

The Collegial Model for URCNA missions arises out of feedback from the churches who called us to maintain the close connection the URCNA currently has between missionaries and sending churches. The term 'collegial' speaks to shared responsibility, as among a group of colleagues, which aims at the heart of this model's thrust of coming alongside our churches and missionaries. One missionary put it this way: "*What missionaries are looking for is not for classis and synod to tell us what to do, but to ask us how they can help.*" With that in view, we lay out four objectives of our minority report. Our first is for greater accountability through Mission Visitors who come with an agenda of a) Listening to the missionary and b) Expanding the field. A vision is given for our men to be held accountable using a "two by two" approach and in time, to be sent out into the field "two by two." Our second objective is for federation-wide unity and growth through a Mission Order and through hiring three part time Mission Trainers. We will use the overture route to create the Mission Order, and as overtures are accepted or rejected, we will gain valuable feedback as we work to submit quality material to synod. Our third objective is for greater stewardship. This is achieved by revising the role of the Missions Coordinator into a part time Mission Secretary contract position overseen by the Synodical Missions Committee which in turn, simplifies synodical agendas moving forward. And our fourth objective is to encourage donations to mission works by establishing matching funds into which donors may allocate large estate gifts to help fund missions and training task of the local church.

Looking to CRC history, we see swings from centralization to decentralization and back again. However, even in their swings, they kept a stronger classical emphasis than the current URC practice. (e.g. when they followed Kuyper and decentralized in 1908, each classis maintained a mission fund, but a criticism in 1936 was that there were 13 classical mission strategies.²⁷) In the 1965 church order, article 75 called classis to take on what was beyond the scope and resources of the local church, in her missions.²⁸ This draws from article 30 of the 1914 CRC church order²⁹ that calls broader assemblies to take on such matters as could not be finished in lesser assemblies. The implications of this important article must be studied further as it impacts our missions strategy. There are reports in CRC history of greater collegiality among pastors and their wives and less isolation in their ministries. However, we find the fatal flaw in the CRC approach was to centralize the control of missions into powerful, synodical boards. While the expertise of such boards can unify and build upon lessons learned, the heavy quotas they laid on the churches was a bitter difficulty for many. Smaller, poorer churches couldn't afford to pay these dues, resulting in a further loss of control and hurt. In their synodical agendas, we find regular feedback from the churches expressing dismay at the lack of involvement with the missionaries at the local level. As boards did the work, local elders were disengaged and de-energized. When the URCNA formed, it reacted by swinging deeply into a congregational model. Our story echoed the Liberation churches who broke away from the GKN in 1944. In

²⁷ Synod 1936 Acts pgs 240-247, see tiny.cc/1908critique

²⁸ CRC Church Order(s) on Missions, see tiny.cc/CRC1965co

²⁹ CRC 1914 Synod Agenda see www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1914acts_et.pdf#page=58

embracing a congregational model, they too reacted to powerful Mission Deputies who had sidelined the local church.³⁰

Throughout history there is a recurring struggle over mission boards and their place in Presbyterian and Reformed churches. The Presbyterian general assembly of 1860 saw intense debates between Charles Hodge and James H. Thornwell on the place of boards, primarily over the concern that they were unhinged from the church.³¹ Though Presbyterians seem to suffer less drastic polity swings than Reformed churches,³² they sympathize with centralized boards drifting into error. Several cases exist where denominations have split over missions as liberalism crept in and created an incongruity between domestic and foreign church planting. In the OPC, Machen was ejected from the Presbyterian Church USA over establishing an Independent Board of Foreign Missions to send only orthodox missionaries overseas, rather than those with Modernist views.³³

Looking to the OPC, we see courage there and in the ARP alike, in sending small delegations of members from a local church to plant a sister church within an hour's radius. If we followed their model, the close proximity of two works would allow for missionary families to dialogue in person and pray together, host joint conferences and retreats, enjoy regular pulpit exchanges, working together in office bearer training, discipleship, and in children's education. If in God's providence a church plant closed, a gospel light would remain on. The field would not go completely dark.

We agree with the OPC's strategy of not creating new OPC church plants all over the world that become part of the OPC, but rather joining or forming faithful federations in their own lands. Our name "United Reformed Churches in North America," logically limits the church's boundaries, and our polity does not fit all cultural contexts. If our strategy were to form multiple church plants in the same area, two or more churches would make a stronger entrance into existing federations that need encouragement from scripture, or a stronger beginning of a new federation. It is far from ideal for our fields to be absorbed, one by one, into federations that are weak in doctrine or purity.

Looking to the Joint Venture Committee model,³⁴ we admire its strength in keeping authority local. Multiple churches have testified of the joy they experience in working in a JVC with sister churches. However, even within a JVC model, the missionaries can suffer isolation. Yet more may be mined from a reworked JVC; two or more churches could work together to send two or more missionaries / deacons to the same region. Doing so necessitates updating the model with field representation lest divisions on the field divide the sending churches.³⁵ The JVC could mirror what the synodical missions committee is aiming for with the classical committees. Smaller churches suffer many fears in sending missionaries, which may be resolved through the shared experience, oversight, budget surpluses and church plant members sent to seed a new church plant.

³⁰ Dr. A. De Visser – Foreign Mission by the Local Church, pgs 219-232 tiny.cc/Foreign_mission

³¹ See Collected writings of James Henley Thornwell, see pgs 145-298 tiny.cc/GreatDebate1860

³² URCNA CO Article 65 prohibits lording it over office bearers, but history shows this wound reoccurring often.

³³ More recently, the Vanguard Presbytery is forming out of the PCA in 2020, see tiny.cc/VanguardPCA

³⁴ See the report from Synod Escondido (2001) *Biblical and Confessional View of Missions*

³⁵ See Dr. A. De Visser speak in a message to CRTS 2020 missions conference: tiny.cc/Representation_fields

Looking to the majority model, we respect the aim to cooperate in our approach. The URCNA's lack of coordination with no common strategy is real.³⁶ Likewise, our lack of consistent care for our missionaries is a real problem.³⁷ Some of the missionaries enjoy strong sending councils and solid collegial support and do not want any change, but others who are hurting are longing for wiser care. Our missionaries are spread thin and some are nearing retirement; we need more men. We have closed fields after missionaries moved on, isolating flocks we once cared for. We have been unsure how to care for men who serve in MINTS / Divine Hope Seminary and non-ordained service. Over the past several years, we have seen several missionaries leave the URC to serve in the OPC. Our Missions Coordinator received a communication from an OPC Coordinator expressing their reservations about this. They want our fields to be strong, as does the synodical missions committee, as do all our churches. We all agree! We agree with recommendation #1 to update the church order article 47 and give classis a voice in crucial field decisions.

Our concern is that since Synod Nyack, the synodical Missions Committee and Coordinator has morphed from an informational role to an advisory role³⁸ to a (potentially) supervisory role. There are reasons for this, yet it has created a conflicted mandate and hindered trust within the federation. At the moment, it seems mission documents and manuals are overlooked, and a Consistory *may or may not* receive advice given by the Missions Coordinator or Missions Committee, with no consequence. Since the Committee and Coordinator are perceived as being removed from the local context, the good advice that is given can be easily disregarded. The majority report suggests resolving this by hiring a second Coordinator and creating Classical Committees, but we highlight four escalating concerns with their recommendations, and even with our present model:

- a) **Proliferation of Administration.** There are three parts to this: The first part is the many new meetings and the time spent by elders and pastors preparing for and traveling to these oversight meetings, even if they are only held monthly. Much of this work is presently carried out in the context of council meetings. These new meetings may be online (not ideal) or else involve travel time, and precious evenings away from family and ministry. The second part is that synodical askings will soar by approximately 214% with the majority plan. Even if a second man is dedicated to participating in the eight Domestic Classical Meetings (with a Foreign Missions Coordinator participating in the Foreign Classical Meetings), he will be stretched too thin; offering solid advice to all of them is asking more than a man could give. The third part is the commitment from the Synodical Missions Committee to oversee another Missions Coordinator. To properly oversee a full-time position involves regular, face-to-face contact. The role's autonomy has a nascent peril attached to it. However synod decides to moves forward, the independence of these positions ought to be corrected in some way.³⁹

³⁶ See Synod 2016 Acts pg 634 www.urnca.org/file_retrieve/42063#page=638

³⁷ See Synod 2018 Acts pgs 307-311 www.urnca.org/2018-acts#page=311

³⁸ See Synod 2016 Acts pgs 30-33 www.urnca.org/file_retrieve/42063#page=34

³⁹ The role is structured like our mission fields, with one strong man leading everything. For example, to date, our committee has never seen even a draft of the Coordinator's "Mission Training Institute" proposal. It may seem the Collegial Model takes our federation a step back by divvying up the Missions Coordinator role into 24x Mission

- b) **Resolving Disputes.** In their feedback to the 2019 “Five Proposals”, one church has asked us: what would happen if a local church, as the overseeing Consistory of a work, disagreed with the decisions of the Classical Oversight Committee? Do you intend to provide a mechanism to resolve disputes? Or do you intend simply to default to the decision of the local church?
- c) **Unhealthy Dichotomy.** Another church asked: How will churches that do not “opt-in” be affected? Will churches who prefer to use their current model of oversight still be expected to provide men to serve on Classical Committees?⁴⁰ Will churches continue financially supporting Missionaries of churches who do not opt-in? Could this not create unhealthy competition between those who are “in” and those who are “out”?
- d) **Stymied Maturity.** One of our pastors raised this concern: When a candidate for the ministry enters ordained ministry, he takes his professor’s wisdom and goes out in the power of the Holy Spirit. Mistakes are made, but God freely covers his sin and gives more grace to his servants and to the flock for whom he shed his blood – Hallelujah! If a professor were to continue supervising his seminarian even many years after his ordination and into his preaching ministry, his personal growth would be stunted and his elders’ honorable task, curtailed. So too with missions, having experts take the reins of oversight from the local church may seem wise when in fact history shows us it leads to both apathy and immaturity in the local church.

The Collegial Model cannot answer all the concerns of all our churches and missionaries, yet it lays a solid foundation which we can build upon in the coming years. It is not about controlling the churches as much as strengthening the classes to hold the churches within them accountable. It envisions our mission fields taking hold of scripture’s trajectory: moving from individual prophetic ministries to team ministries as observed in the Gospels, the Acts of the apostles and in the Epistles. It proposes our sending churches invite Mission Visitors in for advice in field expansion and our smaller churches invite Mission Trainers in for assistance in evangelism.

The Collegial Model offers four simple recommendations to synod:

Recommendation #1 – Mission Visitors: Classis shall appoint three mission representatives. At least one of these mission visitors shall be an elder. Called, “Mission Visitors,” they shall make one visit every two years to all foreign and domestic fields *and* sending churches within the classis. These visits are not intended to take over the need for the local church to visit their fields; they are supplementary to the local church’s visiting schedule. Mission Visitors shall also serve as church visitors to missionaries and their councils when invited by either to be such. Travel expenses shall be reimbursed by the classis treasurer, which greatly reduces synodical askings. Visiting “two by two” creates organic contexts for dialogue and prayer for the field’s faithfulness and fruitfulness. As is the practice of our Missions Coordinator, broadening the visit

Visitors, 3x part time Mission Trainers and a Mission Secretary, but this lines up with a vision of having peers hold one another accountable, as a healthy congregation does, spurring one another on to love and good works.

⁴⁰ Finding ~ 5-7 men to serve on every classis Committee (Foreign & Domestic) and 2 Synodical Reps is a concern as one classis has been unable to find just 2 men to serve on the synodical Missions Committee for almost 2 years.

to offer pulpit supply gives opportunity to love the missionary and the church. Classis could cover pulpit supply if the mission was visited over a weekend.⁴¹ Classis may give honorariums to the Mission Visitors for visiting, considering the time involved in making visits. Loving the missionary and his family well by sending the wives of the Mission Visitors along is a great idea, as long as both the missionary and sending church concur. Classis may cover the cost of the wives and ease the burden on the missionaries by covering hotel costs and a hosting budget, giving opportunity for the Mission Visitors to host the missionary family to dinner. See Appendix 2 for suggested budgets, and financial comparisons with current and majority models.

Working through questions similar to those of church visitors, but with a missions emphasis, they will learn from the missionary of fertile regions nearby that are ripe for another church plant. No more than six weeks after visiting the missionary, they will follow up by visiting the sending church. Pastoral advice may be brought to the council, for example, to update a salary or create a JVC to strengthen oversight. In conjunction with all parties, a report shall be finalized for classis. These reports will seek to inspire a sister church in classis to join a JVC to send another family into the same region. The Lord willing, ministerial isolation will diminish, and fields will strengthen fields as more churches, mission works and schools are spawned nearby. We foresee many advantages to the classes taking on a proactive visiting role:

- a) Trust will develop as Mission Visitors assist the local church without usurping authority.
- b) Advice will be more readily received by Mission Visitors from within the classis.
- c) Corrective action will be timelier, following Matthew 18 and using narrower assemblies. If issues are found, they will lovingly, personally admonish as per Heidelberg Catechism QA 85 and if need be, go to the sending church with their concerns to seek their help.
- d) Appeals will be sent through existing channels rather than involving another committee.
- e) Reports will be sent to classis (rather than to synod). Synod is swiftly gridlocked by matters the narrower assemblies can easily manage. Hiring a Domestic Coordinator would thicken reports to future synodical agendas when we ought to be pondering how to pare them down.
- f) Rather than having different classes support multiple men in the same field, the classes will naturally begin adopting and supporting a field, as it is less complicated and expensive for Mission Visitors to be sent from one classis to one field.

Visiting those in extraordinary service: Mission Visitors shall meet once every two years with men *ordained to full time service in MINTS, Divine Hope Seminary and chaplaincies*. These visits may be in conjunction with classis meetings to reduce the quantity of meetings. Questions will focus on doctrine and life, ensuring they continue to bless our federation. Mission Visitors can learn from them and their ideas of improving upon our training for men entering into missions. They may inquire of men who may be fitted for our fields. These visits will not usurp the oversight of their sending churches, but only accent their care. If sinful patterns in doctrine

⁴¹ CRA law issues evaporate as classis covers this. See financial info in Collegial Model of tiny.cc/Appendix_2

or life arise, a follow-up visit with the sending church would be in order.⁴² Reports shall be finalized in consultation with all parties. Reports shall offer classis a mechanism to pray for their ministries.

Visiting those in non-ordained service: A church that has been supporting a non-ordained Mission Worker may request in communication to classis that classis send the Mission Visitors on a special visit to its mission worker. If classis concurs, the visit shall be arranged. Following both the field visit and council visit, the report to classis may recommend: a) for classis to keep visiting the field every two years and maintain the status quo. b) for classis to ask CECCA to build relationships with churches in the area; or c) for classis to decide on forming a new field, to send out more men.

Recommendation #2 – Synodical Committee: Every classis shall appoint two Mission Visitors to serve on the synodical Missions Committee. At least one of them shall be an elder. The committee shall meet annually in person and quarterly by video conference. Meeting minutes shall be sent to the classes and reports submitted to every synod for approval. Two sub-committees shall help unify our federation moving forward:

Documentation: A subcommittee of one member from each classis shall update our missions strategy, manuals, and the formation of a URCNA Mission Order. If his Consistory agrees, each member shall submit changes by overture(s) to his respective classis. We humbly request each classis rigorously examine every overture, submitted in parallel to all. Rejecting overtures with explanations is feedback that will help the committee improve its work. The Missions Committee has come to a major fork in the road in how we will unify our strategy. Either we can engineer a kind of shared control over fields between full time advisors, classical committees and the local church (as suggested in the majority report), or pursue unity through well-written mandates, which classes use to hold its churches accountable (as proposed in this minority report). Even as we submit to confessional documents rather than a hierarchical structure to maintain doctrinal purity, so we would be consistent in doing so in missions. Scripture is the 1st degree of unity, confessions 2nd degree, church order 3rd degree and Mission Order⁴³ a 4th degree of unity.

Education: A subcommittee of three “Mission Trainers” shall unify our churches through training. Mission Trainers shall assist the churches in connecting young men with fields and with churches. One of the three men each classis nominates for Missions Visitor shall have the capacity to instruct the churches in missions and evangelism, lead conferences, and potentially serve as a Mission Trainer. After the fall 2020 classis meetings, the synodical Missions Committee will review the Mission Trainer candidates’ resumé’s (with council cover letters offering them to serve as a Mission Trainer) and vote for three men to serve as Mission Trainers. Each man will serve 3-year terms, of up to 3 terms.⁴⁴ Retired missionaries would be well suited for this role; we urge the churches to appoint such as potential Mission Trainers, as God provides them. They will receive honoraria to allow them to serve well, and a synodical line item of

⁴² Ibid. Note 4.

⁴³ Dr. A. De Visser – Foreign Mission by the Local Church, see page 224 tiny.cc/Kuyper_mission-order

⁴⁴ Stagger terms to expire in successive years. The Synodical Missions Committee will annually review their work and vote at the conclusion of their term to have them serve again or move another man into the role.

\$22,000 to act upon the following ideas.⁴⁵

- a) *Organize biannual training for young men.* The OPC actively seeks out and encourages godly young men in their denomination to consider if the Lord would use their gifts in a calling to the ministry, inviting them to participate in the Timothy Conferences.⁴⁶ Perhaps the committee could accent their conference with URCNA workshops of our own.
- b) *Organize biannual Missions Conference.* In conjunction with a few others, Rev. Bout organized this conference twice, arranging for speakers to boldly challenge us and lead us in the way of obedience in fulfilling the Great Commission. Our love for Christ expanded through these times of collegiality and prayer for missions.
- c) *Publicize what God is doing in our churches through mission evenings at synod,* arranging for missionaries to give short presentations and to respond with prayer and praise. They shall make the churches aware of the schedule and consider live broadcasting this event.
- d) *Assist in revitalizing churches as they are invited to do so.* Many of our churches are growing older without growing in number. The Mission Trainers can be called upon to assist the churches in training the congregation in evangelism and missions.
- e) *Guide Mission Secretary's publicity / website work.* URCNA Missions content online must be current and interactive to help the next generation stay engaged. It would be helpful to enlist the missionaries in sharing what they want to share. We need a strategy to direct the flow from one source to the next that uses the simplest methods to increase traffic.
- f) *Serve as liaisons* to NAPARC missions meetings, mission organizations and seminaries.

If recommendations #1 and #2 are acceded to by synod, we invite a church to take the suggested beginnings of an overture in Appendix #1 to classis and then to synod, to document these changes.

Recommendation #3 – Mission Secretary: The Mission Coordinator role shall be rolled into a Mission Secretary and become a purely administrative, non-voting position on the Missions Committee; a deacon may be well suited for this role. The role involves updating the URCNA Missions website and social media, the Trumpet, and the annual prayer map. He shall forward prayer bulletins, quarterly minutes, and requests for advice to the appropriate people. He shall approve receipts of Mission Trainers. And he shall facilitate communication among the Mission Visitors by moderating a discussion board for them. The Mission Secretary shall have a part-time position and as the position holds no authority, the simplified role can be administered as follows:

- a) The position shall begin as early as the fall of 2020 with a base contract of \$10,000 USD,

⁴⁵ See Note 7, Collegial Model tab, tiny.cc/Appendix_2 Honorarium of \$10,000 USD annually. If churches release the men to allocate 15% of their time to role, they could spend 7-8 weeks / year on this work. As budgetary needs grow the missions committee report to synod may request adjustments, with grounds, rationale and goals laid out.

⁴⁶ See Timothy Conference Prospectus: www.opc.org/cce/Timothy/TimConf2019Prospectus.pdf

with the expectation of working 8 hours per week for 48 weeks per year, plus travel expenses. The minimum benefits required by law for this part time position will be provided. Extra hours (if necessary) can be tabulated at \$25 / hr and approved along with other expenses by the Mission Committee and submitted to the respective synodical treasurer.

- b) Candidate shall be hired and overseen by the synodical Mission Committee by annual contract. The synodical Missions Committee will have oversight of the tasks and finances while the local church will retain spiritual oversight. Resumés with a council recommendation as cover letter may be sent to the synodical Missions Committee Clerk: urcnamccclerk@gmail.com

Recommendation #4 – Missions and Training Matching Fund: If we are to send out more men, substantial financial needs are ahead of us. A question we are asking is how can we inspire more sacrificial giving to assist our churches? In God’s providence, large donors wish to give of their estates broadly to URCNA missions. However, issues of conflict and control often arise in the context of large funds controlled by synodical or classical committee(s). In consultation with a lawyer, accountant and the JVA, we recommend each Corporation of the URCNA establish a Missions and Training Matching Fund from which URCNA churches may draw, 4 times per year.

- a) **Synodical Level Contributions:** Beginning in the 4th quarter of 2020, each corporation shall establish a *Missions and Training Matching Fund*.⁴⁷ The corporation(s) will advise how churches and individuals can submit charitable gifts to the fund(s).⁴⁸ Quarterly financials shall show statements of account and offer the opportunity to individuals to allocate portions of their estate towards URCNA missions. In donating to matching funds, gifts go much further.
- b) **Local Level Contributions:** Beginning in the 4th quarter of 2021, churches and church plants shall create their own Missions and Training Fund, and thereafter collect for the fund quarterly, giving explanation in their bulletins on how their members might give locally or nationally. The local fund is for missions and training work overseen by the church (i.e. local evangelism, missionaries, mission trips, internships and seminarian support) in compliance with local laws. Local giving will be stimulated as their giving goes further, being *potentially* matched.
- c) **Funding Mechanism:** As early as January 2022, depending on whether the matching fund(s) have funds to give,⁴⁹ participating churches shall submit a summary of their fund’s mandate, and the previous quarter’s deposits / withdrawals, to two deacons appointed by classis to 3 year terms to review these submissions. The request must be made within 30 days of quarter end. If the request is in good order, they shall forward it on to the corporation within 30 days.

⁴⁷ The JVA recommended to us that each Corporation establish a fund as it is easier if US funds did not come to the JVA to be distributed by it. CRA tax law and currency conversion costs make country-specific funds preferable.

⁴⁸ Charitable Impact and Canadahelps enable giving securities; Christian Stewardship Services enable endowments.

⁴⁹ All churches who adhere to the criteria shall receive funds if quarterly disbursements are over \$25,000.

- d) **Funding Disbursements:** To reiterate, these matching funds are not for regular budgetary needs, but for reaching more people with the gospel! The fund(s) are designed to be cycled often, distributing up to 50% of the fund(s) as measured from the close of the previous calendar year, every year. Quarterly distributions will be divided equally and proportionally amongst participating churches, offering matching funds of up to \$5,000 per submission, per quarter. As funds begin flowing, synod can adjust the annual cap in coming years.⁵⁰

We praise God for the faithful labors of our Missions Coordinator. From Synod Visalia until now, Rev. Bout has moved us forward through his strong leadership of the biannual conference and his relentless care for hurting missionaries. Rev. Bout has shown us our weaknesses, which shall be corrected, in time, through Mission Visitors, Mission Trainers, a Mission Order, a Mission Secretary and especially, through the reinforced vision to send out men “two by two.” If synod accedes to these recommendations, we humbly ask that Rev. Bout remain in his role for the rest of 2020 to smooth out the transition. We propose synod strike a committee to determine how to care for our brother through this transition, laying out URCNA obligations as well as the obligations of his overseeing council. We trust our heavenly Father has great things in store for both him and his family! We realize these changes may be hard for some on the synodical mission committee and allow provision for them to step down before the fall classes meetings, before their terms expire.

In summary, the classes will now take the lead on assisting the local church in spiritual care and accountability for the fields within the classis. The synodical Missions Committee will press for unity and training. The Mission Secretary will be part time and focus on administration. The Lord willing, every missionary, church planter and sending church, and ordained educator and chaplain shall be visited by Mission Visitors from classis, every two years. Opportunity is given to improve our care for non-ordained Mission Workers. The Collegial Model offers greater accountability, spiritual care, training and incentive to give than the present model, at less administrative expense. We project that adopting the Collegial model would result in the synodical askings for upcoming years dropping to ~ 76% of 2019’s numbers and classical askings rising according to the fields overseen by churches of classis. As Mission Visitors return from field visits to their home churches, we foresee more members within our churches testifying of the joy, spiritual refreshment and comfort that is often experienced through the Christian ministry.⁵¹ We pray these adjustments will fortify our fields, making them more suitable for young men considering missions and bringing glory to God as we go out and spread the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to all nations!

*For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.
Romans 11:36*

⁵⁰ For a current cap of \$20,000 per year. Possible Scenario: If the Canadian fund closed 2021 with \$800,000, then \$400,000 funds are available in 2022, or \$100,000 per quarter. If 20 Canadian churches applied in January of 2022, a) 5 with 4th quarter contributions of \$6,000, b) 5 with 4th quarter contributions of \$3,000, c) 10 with 4th quarter contributions of \$1,000, then the corporation would write out 20 checks with a) 5 receiving \$5,000, b) 5 receiving \$3,000 and c) 10 receiving \$1,000. \$50,000 is distributed, based on the matching and equal proportional criteria.

⁵¹ Titus’ joy, spiritual refreshment and affection after visiting Corinth had great effect on others. (2 Corinthians 7)

Appendix 1 to the Minority Report Recommendations for Growing Together in Missions

1. *New Article 28 Mission Visitors (reference article 27) should be added to lay out the roles of Mission Visitors in the synodical missions committee.*

New Article 28 – Mission Visitors Each classis shall appoint at least three experienced office-bearers, at least one of which is an elder, to visit missionaries and their sending councils once every two years. They shall give account of their visit to the classis. Going two by two, they shall inquire of the missionary and his labors to the end that they may encourage the missionary and seek to advance the church's missionary task in that region. These visitors shall also serve as church visitors to missionaries and their councils when invited by the missionary or Consistory to do so. Two Mission Visitors from each classis, one being an elder, shall serve on the synodical Missions Committee.

Grounds:

- a) “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” Proverbs 11:14; “Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.” Proverbs 15:22; “For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety.” Proverbs 24:6
- b) As a parallel to Church Visitors, Mission Visitors shall assist missionaries and their sending churches by seeking to understand and apply pastoral wisdom and advice as necessary. Mission Visitors allow for a timelier process should corrective action be in order, involve the narrower assemblies, and simplify the appeals process should one arise.

Appendix 2

1. Administrative Expense Cost Comparison of Current, Majority, and Collegial Models

| | Total | T. Expenses | Coordinator(s) | M. Secretary | Committee(s) [4] | M. Visitors [5] | Chair | Training [6] |
|---|------------|---|----------------|--------------|------------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|
| Line 1: 2019 Current [1] | \$ 122,078 | \$ 168,311 | \$ 104,901 | | \$ 9,868 | | | \$ 7,309 |
| Line 2: 2023 Majority [2] | \$ 314,520 | \$ 360,753 | \$ 246,050 | | \$ 58,534 | | | \$ 9,936 |
| Line 3a: 2023 Collegial synod portion [3] | \$ 80,919 | \$ 127,152 | \$ - | \$ 13,877 | \$ 10,534 | \$ - | \$ 1,000 | \$ 55,508 |
| Line 3b: 2023 Collegial classes portion | \$ 47,500 | | | | | \$ 47,500 | | |
| Line 4: 2023 Majority Comparison (Line 2 / Line 1) | 258% | = \$328,397 / \$122,078 | | | | | | |
| Line 5: 2023 Collegial Comparison (Line 3 / Line 1) | 105% | = (synodical portion \$80,919 + classical portion \$47,500) / \$122,078 | | | | | | |
| Line 6: 2019 Missions ratio of askings (Current) | 73% | = \$122,078 / \$168,311 | | | | | | |
| Line 7: 2023 synodical askings rise (Majority) | 214% | = \$360,753 / \$168,311 | | | | | | |
| Line 8: 2023 synodical askings reduction (Collegial) | 76% | = \$127,152 / \$168,311 | | | | | | |
| Notes: All Expenses in US Dollars | | | | | | | | |
| [1] Current Model. T. Expenses adds the "non Missions" 2019 amount (\$168,311-\$122,078) so as to estimate new total askings. | | | | | | | | |
| [2] Majority Model. T. Expenses adds the "non Missions" 2019 amount as above | | | | | | | | |
| [3] Collegial Model. T. Expenses adds the "non Missions" 2019 amount as above | | | | | | | | |
| [4] Sum of Committee Travel. Not having estimates from the Majority Model, these are best guesses. | | | | | | | | |
| [5] Sum of Mission Visitor honorariums, Pulpit Supply and Travel; The rough budget of \$47,500 is covered by classis askings. | | | | | | | | |
| [6] Sum of Conferences, publications, publicity, Mission Trainers. | | | | | | | | |

2. Administrative Expense of Current Model

| | | | Coordinator [2] | | | Committee and Training [3] | | | |
|--|---|-------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------|
| | Total | T. Expenses | Salary / Benefits | Office Supplies | Travel | M. Committee | M. Conference | Publications | Website |
| 2018 Actual [1] | \$ 109,337 | \$ 152,826 | \$ 82,722.88 | \$ 2,741.99 | \$ 9,960.24 | \$ 13,912 | | | |
| Line 1: Current 2019 Expenses [4] | \$ 122,078 | \$ 168,311 | \$ 91,294 | \$ 1,934 | \$ 11,674 | \$ 9,868 | \$ 3,520 | \$ 3,546 | \$ 242 |
| Notes: All Expenses in US Dollars | | | | | | | | | |
| [1] | See 4th Quarter 2018 URCNA - JOINT JVA, pages 6-7 | | | tiny.cc/2018-4th-quarter | | | | | |
| [2] | See Final Year, URCNA - Joint Missions Coordinator Expenses | | | tiny.cc/2019-coordinator-expense | | | | | |
| [3] | See Final Year, URCNA - Joint Missions Committee Budget | | | tiny.cc/2019-committee-expense | | | | | |
| [4] | See 4th Quarter 2019 URCNA - JOINT JVA, pages 6-7 | | | tiny.cc/2019-4th-quarter | | | | | |

3. Administrative Expense of Majority Model (Coordinator, Secretary, Split committees, Sub committees)

| | Total | F. Coordinator [1] | D. Coordinator [2] | F. Com [3] | D. Com [4] | Classical Com(s) [5] | Training [6] |
|---|--|--------------------|--------------------|------------|------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Line 2: 2023 Majority Model | \$ 314,520 | \$114,142* | \$131,608* | \$ 5,267 | \$ 5,267 | \$ 48,000 | \$ 9,936 |
| Notes: All Expenses in US Dollars and adjusted for 3 years of inflation (2.2%) unless otherwise noted with * | | | | | | | |
| [1] | Adjusted for inflation (2.2%) for 4 years, as taken from 2019's numbers | | | | | | |
| [2] | See Majority Recommendation for new Domestic Coordinator. Number is approximate. 15% higher salary for US candidate, to cover health insurance | | | | | | |
| [3] | Foreign Mission Committee expenses with 8 men traveling | | | | | | |
| [4] | Domestic Mission Committee expenses with 8 men traveling | | | | | | |
| [5] | Assuming 8 Foreign, 8 Domestic Classical Committees, 6 members each, spending \$500 / year each on mileage. (inadequate unless zoom meetings used) | | | | | | |
| [6] | Sum of Conference, Publication and website Expenses (additional \$2,000) | | | | | | |

4. Administrative Expense of Collegial Model (Mission Secretary, Mission Visitors, Mission Trainers)

| | Total | Secretary [1] | Committee | Field [2] | Council [3] | Educator [4] | Chair [5] | Trainers [6] | Training [7] |
|---|--|---------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|
| Line 3a: 2023 Collegial synod | \$ 79,919 | \$ 13,877 | \$ 10,534 | | | | \$1,000* | \$ 32,024 | \$ 23,484 |
| Line 3b: 2023 Collegial classes | \$ 47,500 | | | \$35,000* | \$10,000* | \$2,500* | | | |
| Notes: All Expenses in US Dollars and adjusted for 3 years of inflation (2.2%) unless otherwise noted with * | | | | | | | | | |
| [1] | Mission Secretary \$13,000 = (Base \$10,000 + 80 extra hours at \$25 / hr \$2,000 + Travel \$1,000) | | | | | | | | |
| [2] | 1/2 of \$70,000 for 20 Field Visits every two years. \$3,500 = (2x Honorarium \$250 + 3x Travel \$650 + 2x P. supply \$125 + 2x hotel \$300 + hosting \$200) | | | | | | | | |
| [3] | 1/2 of \$20,000 for 20 Council visits every two years. \$1,000 = (2x Honorarium \$250 + 2x Travel \$250) | | | | | | | | |
| [4] | 1/2 of \$5,000 for 10 Extraordinary visits, normally in combination with classis meetings, every two years. \$500 = (2x Honorarium \$250) | | | | | | | | |
| [5] | Honorarium for chairman's work in overseeing mission secretary is \$1000 / annually or ~ 5% of secretary contract. | | | | | | | | |
| [6] | Mission Trainer \$30,000 = (3x Honorarium \$10,000) | | | | | | | | |
| [7] | Training Budget \$22,000 = (M. Conference \$3,500 + Timothy Conference \$3,000 + Publications \$3,500 + Website \$2,000 + M. Trainers Travel \$10,000) | | | | | | | | |

Signatories of the Minority Report:

Harold Meinders
 Steve Schulz
 Paul Wagenmaker
 Steve Williamson

VI. Clerical and Financial Matters

RECOMMENDATION 15: That Synod continue to pay Pastor Richard Bout’s salary, expenses, and yearly raises as previously determined, and that the cost of the Canadian employer payroll taxes be increased by an additional \$20 to cover a minor increase on employer taxation in Canada. (Rates in Canadian dollars for 2020 will be Salary: \$75,430.20; Housing: \$26,179.80; RRSP: \$10,158.00; Employer Payroll Taxes: \$4,108. Approximate costs in US dollars for 2020 @ \$1 CDN=\$.70 US (rate as of Synod deadline) would be loosely Salary: \$53,098.36; Housing: \$18,429.02; RRSP: \$7,150.63; Employer Payroll Taxes: \$2,891.79)

Ground:

- We continue to give thanks for the faithful work of our Missions Coordinator, and recognize our obligations to support him as he labors on behalf of the federation.

RECOMMENDATION 16: That Synod Redeemer establish the budget of the URCNA Missions Committee based upon the decisions of Synod as follows:

- If the committee is unchanged and remains with 17 men, to leave the budget at \$19,000 USD/a.
- If the committee is divided into a Synodical Foreign Missions Committee and Synodical Domestic Missions Committee, that the budget of each committee be set at \$9,500 USD/a.
- If the committee is reduced to its original size of 9 but otherwise unchanged, to set the budget at \$14,000 USD/a.

Ground:

- The current budget is sufficient for the travel of 17 men alongside our regular publications. Decreasing the number of men on the committee will not create a proportionate decrease since the cost of publications are not affected by the number of men on the committee.

VII. Concluding matters

A summary of our recommendations to Synod are as follows:

RECOMMENDATION 1: To receive the report of the URCNA Missions Coordinator and express the thanks of Synod for his continued faithful and diligent service.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That Synod adopt the “International Seminary Students and the URCNA” as pastoral advice to the churches in working with international seminary students who desire to return to their home countries as URCNA missionaries.

RECOMMENDATION 3: That Synod encourage the Missions Committee to use, “International Seminary Students and the URCNA” as they advise churches and international students regarding cooperation with foreign nationals in gospel ministry abroad.

RECOMMENDATION 4: That the federation divide the current committee to create two committees, namely the URCNA Domestic Missions Committee and the URCNA Foreign Missions Committee, each having one delegate from each Classis, the descriptions of which are found in Appendix One.

RECOMMENDATION 5: That the federation create a full time Domestic Missions Coordinator position, the description of which is found in Appendix One. The current Missions Coordinator would become the Foreign Missions Coordinator.

RECOMMENDATION 6: That Synod implement a procedure for the nomination of the Domestic Missions Coordinator which will follow the procedure the federation adopted for calling our present coordinator.

RECOMMENDATION 7: That each Classis be encouraged by Synod to have a Classical Committee on Domestic Missions (CCDM) whose mandate and composition will be determined by the classis in light of the following guiding principles:

RECOMMENDATION 8: That each Classical Committee on Domestic Missions make recommendations to its classis for two Mission Visitors (who could be Church Visitors of that classis) who can be called upon, as necessary, to aid in the resolution of conflict between missionaries and their overseeing Consistory.

RECOMMENDATION 9: That Synod encourage the general implementation of Classical Committees for Foreign Missions.

RECOMMENDATION 10: That Synod encourage the URCNA Missions Committee (Foreign) to contact sending churches to determine if there is interest in creating a Classical Committee on Foreign Missions that can aid in serving their particular field according to the parameters given above. Where interest exists, the URCNA Missions Committee will work with the sending church to write proposals to their respective Classis to establish a Classical Committee for Foreign Missions within the Classis.

RECOMMENDATION 11: That Synod encourage the URCNA Missions Committee to contact Classes without any representation on the foreign field with ideas of how they can be involved in strengthening current fields (through cooperation with another Classis and representation on their CCFM) or re-establishing contact with potentially viable foreign fields that have been closed in the last 10 years.

RECOMMENDATION 12: That Synod adopt the following as pastoral advice to the churches.

- a. That educational missionaries with a domestic focus (e.g. Divine Hope, Redemption Prison Ministries) be adopted by the classis in which they operate, and that these classes see how they can best serve these men and their calling churches in a way that fits the needs of each particular situation. The synodical committees would be happy to help in giving advice should it be requested.
- b. That other extraordinary missionaries sent by URC consistories, though not considered here, approach the Missions Committee to develop guidelines, so that

they are not neglected within the support structures of the federation regarding the work of missions.

- c. That men engaged in such ministry be recognized under Art. 47 of the Church Order, and therefore have the advice of their classis before accepting such a position as a URCNA missionary. We make this recommendation due to the weighty responsibility of those who would take on teaching in this capacity, and as it helps the classis to own and support its educational missionaries in a proper and encouraging way.
- d. If so desired, classis can appoint a man serving in this capacity to be their representative for the Synodical Committee on Foreign or Domestic Missions.

RECOMMENDATION 13: That Synod approve the concept of two national Missions Funds as outlined above, and task committees (one for the U.S. and one for Canada) with financial knowledge in their respective nation to explore the potential establishment of these funds and report back to the next Synod for final consideration by the churches.

RECOMMENDATION 14: That Synod recognize RMS (Reformed Mission Services) as a partner organization that can be used, as needed, in disaster relief, mission projects, diaconal efforts, and training in evangelism for the strengthening of URCNA missions.

RECOMMENDATION 15: That Synod continue to pay Pastor Richard Bout's salary, expenses, and yearly raises as previously determined, and that the cost of the Canadian employer payroll taxes be increased by an additional \$20 to cover a minor increase on employer taxation in Canada. (Rates for 2020 will be Salary: \$75,430.20; Housing: \$26,179.80; RRSP: \$10,158.00; Employer Payroll Taxes: \$4,108)

RECOMMENDATION 16: That Synod Redeemer establish the budget of the URCNA Missions Committee based upon the decisions of Synod as follows:

- If the committee is unchanged and remains with 17 men, to leave the budget at \$19,000 USD/a.
- If the committee is divided into a Synodical Foreign Missions Committee and Synodical Domestic Missions Committee, that the budget of each committee be set at \$9,500 USD/a.
- If the committee is reduced to its original size of 9 but otherwise unchanged, to set the budget at \$14,000 USD/a.

We pray that the Lord might continue to build His church through the faithful and humble efforts of our federation.

For Christ and His Kingdom,
The URCNA Missions Committee

VIII. APPENDIX ONE

Policies for a Synodical Committee on Domestic Missions and a Domestic Missions Coordinator

A. Functions and Tasks of the Synodical Domestic Missions Committee, and of the Domestic Missions Coordinator

The committee would function as an information hub for URCNA domestic church planting, encouraging communication and facilitating cooperation among URCNA church planters, councils, Joint Venture Committees, Classical Committees on Domestic Missions, and congregations by doing the following:

- a. The committee shall obtain updates from the missionaries and church planters, from their respective councils, and from any Joint Venture Committee or Classical Committee on Domestic Missions with which they are connected, for publication in the missions newsletter and missions page of the urcnaMissions.org website.
- b. The committee shall ascertain and remain abreast of the disparate financial needs of church planters, and disseminate pertinent information to URCNA councils (e.g., location, family, nature and needs of a particular ministry).
- c. The committee shall generally promote the cause of URCNA church planting throughout North America in a way that consistently represents our commitment to function as a covenanted body.
- d. The committee shall gather information about the work of outreach and church planting which could assist consistories, Joint Venture Committees, classis missions committees, and church planters in the day-to-day activity of outreach and church planting.
- e. The committee shall produce, in cooperation with the Classical Committees on Domestic Missions, a report on the work of URCNA domestic missions to each synod.

B. Specific Tasks of members on the Synodical Committee on Domestic Missions:

- a. Committee members shall assist the Domestic Missions Coordinator in the execution of his tasks by reporting of their work and relaying missions information to him. They shall also make an annual review of the labors of the DMC to be given to his overseeing consistory and to synod.
- b. Committee members shall serve on their respective Classical Committees on Domestic Missions (if possible) and report to their respective classes on the work of the committee.

C. Specific Tasks of the Domestic Missions Coordinator:

- a. The DMC will serve the Synodical Committee on Domestic Missions by remaining continually engaged in the work of domestic missions-related communication within the URCNA. As with all ordained ministers in the federation, his own Consistory will oversee his doctrine and life.
- b. The DMC shall maintain contact with all church planters in North America.
- c. He shall maintain contact with calling churches, Joint Venture Committees and Classical Committees on Domestic Missions for current needs and financial status of their church plants. This financial data will be published to the churches along with the amount of money needed to support URCNA missions.

- d. He shall advise Classical Committees on Domestic Missions, but also work with CCDMs and with Mission Visitors in giving advice to church planters, mission workers, consistories, and Joint Venture Committees as requested.
- e. He shall periodically visit church planters for encouragement, exhortation, and preaching/teaching/counseling, in order to assist the calling churches and mission workers as requested by either party.
- f. He shall develop and direct a program for on-going church planter development and training, for all of our church-planters in the federation.
- g. He shall remind congregations of the priority domestic URCNA church plants take over para-church organizations.
- h. He shall work with the Synodical Committee on Domestic Missions to maintain the federation's missions webpage (urcnaMissions.org); the missions webpage may include the following:
 - i. A media library of URCNA and NAPARC resources relating to missions for the benefit of the churches. Updates relating to the missionaries and church planters under consistorial oversight within the federation.
 - ii. Links to the websites of missionaries and church planters under consistorial oversight within the federation.
 - iii. The Domestic Missions Coordinator shall work with the Foreign Missions Coordinator for producing and disseminating the official federational missions newsletter.
 - iv. The Domestic Missions Coordinator may assist the churches/classes with the organization and promotion of missions conferences.
 - v. The Domestic Missions Coordinator may assist in service trips and other needs of church plants as requested by church planters and their overseeing Consistories.

D. The Special Officers of the Synodical Committee on Domestic Missions:

- i. The Chairman – shall be elected by the members of the committee on a yearly basis. He shall set the agenda for and preside at each meeting of the committee.
- ii. The Vice Chairman – shall preside at each committee meeting in the absence of the Chairman.
- iii. The Clerk – shall keep minutes of all the regular committee meetings, and shall be responsible to present these minutes to the councils of all congregations of the URCNA as requested. The Clerk and/or the Chairman shall serve as signatories for all official documents of the committee.
- iv. The Treasurer – shall certify to the committee the accuracy of receipts and disbursements and the proper administration of the committee's funds.

E. Qualifications for the Members of the Synodical Committee on Domestic Missions, and for the Domestic Missions Coordinator

- 1. For committee members:
 - a. Committee members must be ordained ministers, elders, or deacons. If an elder/deacon, he must be actively serving in office when appointed but may serve

the committee beyond the conclusion of his term. He may be reappointed to the committee beyond his term with the approval of his consistory.

- b. Committee members should have experience and competence in church planting.
 - c. Committee members should possess communication skills, and be capable in the utilization of technology.
2. For Domestic Missions Coordinator:
 - a. The Coordinator must be an ordained minister of the Word.
 - b. He should have had personal experience and direct involvement in domestic church planting.
 - c. He should show strength in both pastoral ministry and administrative skills.
 - d. He should possess communication skills, and be capable in the utilization of technology.
 - e. He must be able to devote a significant amount of time to the work committed to him.

F. Appointment of the Members on the Synodical Committee on Domestic Missions, and of the Domestic Missions Coordinator

1. Committee Members:

- (a) Number of appointees: One representative shall be appointed to represent each classis of the federation, along with one alternate per classis.
- (b) Means of appointment: Each classis shall appoint an office bearer to serve as their representative. He must be actively serving in office when appointed but may serve the committee beyond the conclusion of his term. He may be reappointed to the committee beyond his term with the approval of his Consistory.
- (c) Term of appointment:
 - i. The term of service for committee members shall be three years.
 - ii. Each committee member shall be eligible to serve up to three terms.
 - iii.

2. Domestic Missions Coordinator:

- (a) Means of appointment:⁵²
 - i. Each classis is encouraged to nominate a minister of the Word for the position of Domestic Missions Coordinator. Nominations shall include:
 - a. The church council that is prepared to supervise the minister of the Word who would also function as the federation's DMC. This minister may already serve the council and their local church, or he might be a minister to whom the council would extend a new call, pending his appointment to the position of Coordinator by synod.
 - b. A clarification of whether the calling church would be lending this man to the work of the DMC as a full-time position or whether the calling church envisions for the man a division of labor between the local church and the broader federation. (Although it would be ideal for the minister to be fully on loan to the federation for the work of missions, the calling council may wish to retain the man for some degree of local ministry, and this should be outlined to synod in the

⁵² Updated in 2016 at Synod – updates not included due to difficulty in understanding changed numeration.

- nomination.)
- c. A compensation plan for the Coordinator in his work and, if applicable, the level of support that will be coming from the calling congregation. The compensation plan should focus on adequate provision of salary, housing, medical, and retirement needs (CO, Art. 10), based on cost of living in the area of the calling church, as well as suggested amounts for items like office, equipment, and travel. The committee will make itself available to interested churches to help set ballpark figures in this regard. Details of the proposed compensation will be subject to the approval of synod.
 - d. A brief introduction to the man; which should include a resume of service in the church and the particular gifts and experience that such a man would bring to the position of Domestic Missions Coordinator.
- ii. From the pool of nominees Synod shall elect a Domestic Missions Coordinator. The election shall be by a majority vote, taken by ballot.
- (b) Term of appointment: The Domestic Missions Coordinator shall ordinarily serve a term of no less than 3 years. The Coordinator shall be eligible for re-election by a subsequent synod without term limit restrictions.
 - (c) Re-appointment of the Domestic Missions Coordinator:
 - i. With the approval of the Domestic Missions Coordinator and his calling Consistory, and upon receiving input from the committee, the Domestic Missions Coordinator may be reappointed by a 2/3 majority vote at the first synod meeting that is at least 3 years from his previous appointment. Reappointment of the DMC shall be done with the approval of his calling Consistory and with the input of the committee.
 - ii. Should a Classis of the federation believe that the missions of the church may be further prospered through the appointment of a new Domestic Missions Coordinator, any Classis of the federation may nominate another minister of the Word to the position. Such a nomination should follow the guidelines listed above in 2. (a) i. On such an occasion the nomination shall be considered by the churches at the first meeting of synod that is at least 3 years from the last appointment of the Domestic Missions Coordinator. The appointment of a new DMC requires a 2/3 majority vote of the synod.

IX APPENDIX TWO

Notes On the Joint Venture Model for Missions

Taken from the Minutes of Synod Escondido (2001), p. 108-111
(Missing the diagram on p. 109)

IV. An articulation of a proper Biblical balance between the responsibility of the "autonomous" local church for the carrying out of missions, on the one hand, and our federation responsibility toward cooperation, coordination and mutual encouragement on the other.

A. Should we form a denominational mission board?

One of the concerns we have as United Reformed Churches is the matter of boards. We believe it is incumbent on us to send out a new generation of Reformed missionaries, but how can we do this most effectively? One of our answers has been the establishment of local committees, i.e. a committee set up under a local Consistory. The Lord has used this to the benefit of our present missionaries. It has also been a system that has involved the local church much more in missions. Yet we do not want to be independent of each other in our missions efforts.

We wish to maintain the local church and its Consistory as the calling, sending and administrating body for the mission effort. This, however, needs to be done in cooperation, coordination, and with the encouragement of other churches. In other words, we desire to maintain the intimate relationship that the missionary has with his Consistory and his church, while at the same time we would like to encourage the participation of sister churches in this effort. Therefore, rather than a denominational board, and pursuant to Church Order Art. 47b, we recommend the Joint Venture model of missions.

B. Proposal #1: The Joint Venture Model

1. The Local Church: The Sole Sending Agency

In light of the aforesaid, on the basis of Scripture, missions is properly the activity of Christ exercised through the local church, not para-church agencies or the synod. The local church is called to conduct missions through her officially commissioned officers. Here we are further instructed by the wisdom of our forefathers in the faith. A synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Synod of 1896, in calling our attention to the Great Commission, pointed out that the church as a whole does not baptize but only the locally instituted church. The synod does not disciple, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded" (*An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, J.H. Bavink, p.59-60). This echoes the pattern of the New Testament church where missions was the task and responsibility of the local church.

In the Joint Venture Model the missions committee is responsible to the Consistory of the calling church. One church is the 'sending church' and a certain number of churches (usually in the same classis) serve as 'supporting churches.' This model, we believe, provides "the churches with the most appropriate means of assistance and encouragement for the missionary task" and at the same time enables us as churches to "assist each other in the support of their missionaries" (Church Order Art. 47).

We propose the Joint Venture Model for the following reasons:

Guidance and Coordination: It may be advisable, due to the sheer weight of responsibility, that the council organize a missions committee to serve the council under its authority. In a multitude of counselors one finds wisdom and guidance (Proverbs 15:22, 20:18, 24:6). We can also better organize and coordinate the assistance and support of our missionaries, in terms of developing mission policies and actions for the field, as well as sharing in the weight of the responsibility including financial costs.

Participation: This model provides a more "hands on" approach to missions. It should encourage closer and more direct relationships between churches and missionaries. There is a shared sense

of responsibility in doing the work of missions. Second, direct involvement may stimulate a godly zeal for the cause of missions within these "several local churches." A federation-wide support tends to a more superficial, distant relationship between the churches and the missionary and does little to stimulate godly zeal for the cause of missions. Third, this also allows churches to participate who are unable to call and send a missionary due to financial considerations.

Stewardship: This model provides a more efficient use of resources such as time and hard-earned monies as it minimizes travel, accomodation and other expenditures which might otherwise be incurred.

Strengthened Relations: This enables the missionary more time during his furlough to minister at his home base, strengthen relations among the several local churches via reporting and representation work, and strengthen relations with his family.

Biblical Precedent: The Holy Spirit commissioned Saul and Barnabas from the congregation in Antioch to go to the mission field (Acts 13:1-3). They were accountable to this congregation (Acts 14:26-28) and also to the congregation in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-5; 21:17-19).

Safe Guard: This safeguards the authority of the local sending church who has responsibility for the supervision of the field, including the raising and administration of necessary funds, as well as the oversight of their own missionary.

Prevention: This also prevents the committee from having a "life of its own." A committee is a group of people to which something has been committed by the council of the church. It does not have any reason for existence apart from the mandate of the local church council.

Avoiding Conflict: In the event that one of the cooperating churches calls and sends a missionary to the same field, the local church ultimately should be responsible for the supervision of the field. This may be necessary to avoid conflict. However, the cooperating church would have oversight over her missionary.

2. Composition of the Missions Committee in the Joint Venture Model

Ideally, the missions committee should be as follows:

- a. Equal representation on the missions committee from the several local cooperating churches for a defined term and appointed by the various councils of the cooperating churches.
- b. Representation might consist of members of council and members of the congregation. For example, it may be modeled after the following structure
Chairman: from the council of the sending church supervising the field
Recording Secretary
Corresponding Secretary (takes care of correspondence with missionary and with supporting churches)
Treasurer
Liaison members from councils of supporting churches

c. The Function of an Organized Missions Committee:

The committee may assist the Consistory in the following areas:

- choosing the fields
- establishing priorities
- establishing a budget
- defining the principles and standards by which the prospective missionaries will be evaluated
- encouraging prayer (Acts 1:14) by keeping the congregation aware
- encouraging missionary zeal in the congregation by way of education and hands on involvement opportunities with the missionary. This will help inspire future missionaries among us.
- informing each Consistory of the missionary's progress, successes, challenges and prayer needs

d. The Benefits of an Organized Missions Committee

- order and establishment of guidelines which assist in smooth functioning
- help in handling quickly the myriad of requests for assistance

We must be clear in our understanding that the work of the missions committee is just that --- the work of a committee --- and functions as an advisory body under the supervision and authority of the council of the local sending church.

Website Oversight Committee Report to Synod Redeemer 2020

An action of Synod 2004 created the Website Oversight Committee (WOC) as a synodical committee with a mandate to oversee and maintain the federation's website at <https://www.urchna.org> as well as produce the federation's annual *Archive Directory*. Each classis appoints an individual to serve on the committee. Synods subsequent to 2004 have tweaked the committee's mandate (and alleviated it of the role of producing the *Archive Directory*), but its core task remains to oversee the federation website. The committee does so primarily in cooperation with and via oversight over the federation's current Webmaster, Gary Fisher.

The current members of the WOC include the following:

- Bruce Vrieling – Classis Ontario East (Chairman)
- Rev. Adrian Dieleman – Classis Pacific Northwest
- Rev. Talman Wagenmaker – Classis Michigan
- Micah Van Maanen – Classis Central US
- Tim Feijer – Classis Southwestern Ontario
- Rev. Chuck Tedrick – Classis South West US
- Stephen Adamus – Classis Eastern US
- Cameron Keller- Classis Western Canada
- Gary Fisher – Webmaster

Old Business

Synod Wheaton 2018 made a number of requests of the WOC, enumerated below:

1. Posting the Affirmations regarding Marriage

These affirmations were approved at Synod 2018 (*Acts of Synod 2018*, article 90), and the WOC was requested to post these on the federation website. This has been completed.

2. Regarding the Statistician

Synod 2018 created a new synodical functionary, the Statistician, tasked with maintaining federation statistics and production of the annual *Archive Directory* (*Acts of Synod 2018*, article 87.1). Since these tasks had up until that point been the responsibility of the Webmaster, the WOC and the Webmaster were asked to work with the new Statistician (Jody Luth) to ensure a smooth transition (article 87.5). We believe this has been done (see Appendix A for more detail). Note: the Statistician was made accountable to each Overseeing Consistory for Synod, not the WOC (article 87.1 and *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 4.8.3), so this report contains no further information about the Statistician's work or the *Archive Directory*.

3. Ministerial News

The WOC's 2018 Report to Synod recommended some editorial changes to the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* concerning what is allowed to be posted to the Ministerial News section of the website (*Acts of Synod*, article 88.7). The Chairman of Synod ruled this recommendation to be out of order, as changes to the *Regulations* must come from a consistory, not a committee. We have therefore requested that the Oversight Consistory for the Website Oversight Committee (OCWOC) bring these recommendations to Synod 2020 in their separate report in this agenda.

For Your Information

Changing our committee's funding model

Since its inception, the WOC has been funded differently than other synodical committees in that it receives funds through classical askings (currently \$100USD or \$125CAD per year) and its funding does not appear in the synodical budget. After discussions with the Canadian Treasurer, we have decided to request that this be changed to bring us in line with other committees, and that our budget simply be a line item in the synodical budget. Because we were not sure that requesting a change of this type is within the purview of the WOC to bring to Synod, we have asked the OCWOC, a consistory, to request this change on our behalf in their report to Synod.

Reappointment of the Oversight Consistory of the Website Oversight Committee (OCWOC)

The *Acts of Synod 2010* article 57.3 record that Synod decided not to create a term limit for the OCWOC's oversight of the WOC. However, inconsistent with this directive, reports of the WOC to each Synod since that time have requested a *reappointment*, which has been granted. Desiring to come into line with the 2010 action of Synod, we no longer intend ordinarily to bring such a request in our report to Synod (which is, incidentally, consistent with the recommendation approved at the last Synod that the Waupun consistory's oversight "continue until *at least* the next Synod" (*Acts of Synod 2018*, article 88.4, emphasis added)).

Webmaster Report

The report from our Webmaster outlining his activities since the last Synod is contained as Appendix A at the end of this report.

WOC Recommendations to Synod 2020:

1. That Synod set the annual budget for the WOC starting in 2021 at \$2000USD; this recommendation is contingent upon Synod approving the recommendation from the OCWOC to change the WOC's funding model. This amount is roughly in line with previous annual expenditures of money received through classical askings.
2. That Synod request the synodical committees of the federation to work with the Webmaster to ensure their committee pages on www.urncna.org include their membership, their mandate, and significant documents related to their committee.

3. That Synod change the annual honorarium for the Webmaster, Gary Fisher, to \$5250USD starting in 2021. The amount currently stands at \$5000USD.
4. That Synod approve a one-time additional “thank you” honorarium payment of \$1000USD (payable in 2021) to Gary Fisher for his substantial work helping to launch the new Synod registration website in 2020.
5. That Synod thank Gary Fisher for his faithful labours as the federation’s Webmaster.
6. That Synod thank the Waupun Consistory for their oversight of the WOC.

APPENDIX A: Webmaster’s Report to Synod Redeemer 2020

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers;

In accordance with the relevant section of the “Regulations for Synodical Procedure” approved by Synod Wheaton 2018, and bearing in mind the requirements and duties enumerated over the years since this task was first described, I humbly offer this Report, “including website analytics and other technical statistics showing the usefulness of the website.” [Regulations 4.7.4.n]

To facilitate your evaluation of the work, I have organized this Report in roughly the order used within the Regulations to define the tasks with which you have entrusted me.

I wish to acknowledge the invaluable direction and assistance given to me by the Web Oversight Committee [WOC], which has always been and continues to be responsive to my requests for guidance, and diligent in relaying website-related questions which arise in their classes. WOC Chair Bruce Vrieling’s leadership and the wise counsel of the Classis Representatives have benefitted the website, and the URCNA, many times; this is by no means a “one-man job.”

I must also express my gratitude for the appointment of the URCNA Statistician, and for Mrs. Jody Luth’s excellent grasp of that position. Following Synod Wheaton, the Statistician and I were in almost daily communications as she was trained on both the software and on the many unique requirements of our Federation Directory, and we worked quite closely as she prepared the 2018 Archive Edition, but over the following year her questions grew both less frequent and more perceptive, and with the exception of a few technical issues the 2019 Archive, which was both the most timely and most complete in our history, was entirely her work from design to execution. For all the reasons given in 2018, making the Directory and Statistics a separate and independent position has given both of us the time needed to accomplish our best work.

My General Responsibilities, as described in the Regulations, begin with day-to-day operation of the Federation website, and to this usually predictable task I devote at least the first and last hour of each day, checking first each morning for help requests (lost passwords, etc.), new documents, event listings in need of approval, emails from both within and outside the URCNA, reports from the hosting company, and a general check of website functions, keeping a list of issues which will require further processing or follow-up. I attend to these at the time, throughout the day, or

during my evening “rounds,” and confront any remaining or continuing tasks on Saturday. I also carry a laptop with me when we travel so that I can perform my duties year-round.

The bulk of requests for my assistance come by email, but my cell number is posted on the site; I typically receive several calls a month. It is my practice, whenever possible, to address phone requests immediately, while the person in need of assistance is still engaged in the task which prompted the call. However, because such calls often come when I am away from my office and unable to do more than attempt to talk the caller through the issue, email requests are still best for most requests, and when it is requested or the best course of action I phone the requestor.

From time to time I email the Clerk of each Classis and the Chairman or Clerk of each standing committee to confirm their information and offer my assistance. This has had variable results, as some of our committees do not use the website in their work and some of the Classes likewise do not see a need for regularly updating their Classis pages. I would in all humility remind both the committees and the churches that we have established URCNA.org precisely for the purpose of facilitating communication among us, and that even brief reports from time to time would help your sister churches and your fellow members know how to pray and for what; to “Rejoice with those who rejoice, [and] *weep with those who weep*,” and to see the United Reformed Churches as truly united, not just related. To that end I offer

Recommendation 1: that Synod Redeemer 2020 encourage our Classes and Committees to keep their pages on the Federation website updated periodically, at least when changes occur, so that members, sister churches, and other visitors (in the case of public information) can be informed of the work being done throughout the Federation. The Webmaster will gladly assist as needed.

I must, with some chagrin, confess that my communications to the Classes by way of our Classis Representatives, who also comprise the Web Oversight Committee, have sometimes fallen short, as I occasionally learn of the agenda cut-off for a given classis only days in advance. I have been working to develop a “generic” reporting format which Representatives could use in preparing their reports, but with sufficient notice I could tailor the reports to include facts which might be pertinent to individual classes if that is desired or of benefit.

Finally, I have worked particularly closely with the Synodical Interim Committee in preparing for Synod Redeemer 2020, and in discussions with that Committee was encouraged to offer the following

Recommendation 2: that to the extent such documentation can be obtained, records from past and future Synods, particularly planning and working documents, be collected and securely stored on the Federation website for use by future Synodical Interim Committees, at their discretion, for the organization and planning of future meetings of Synod, and for historical purposes, so that the collective wisdom of previous Synod planners can benefit those to come.

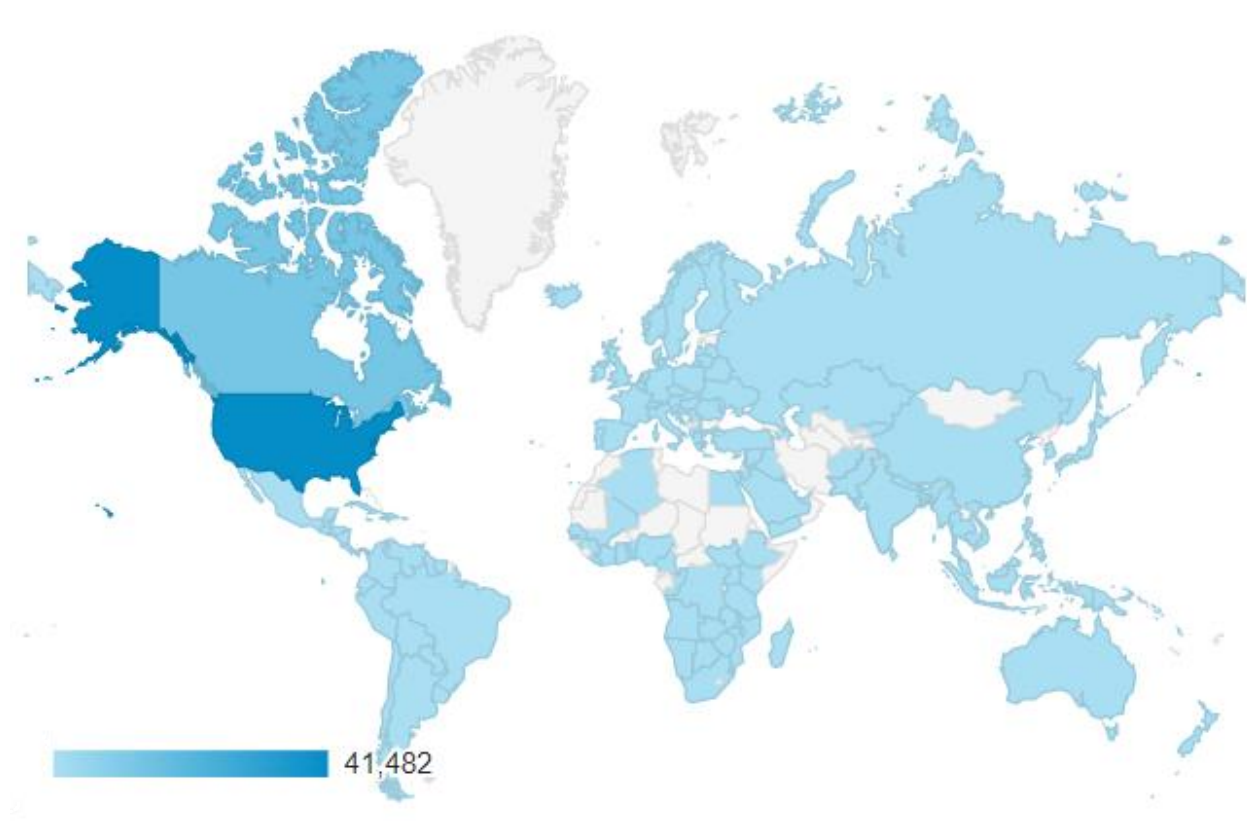
I have prepared and attached three pages below offering statistics, analytics and observations I believe will be helpful in evaluating both the website and my efforts.

Serving the church in this position, while occasionally taxing, remains a joy and a blessing, and I thank the Synod, our churches, and above all our God for granting me the opportunity to utilize the gifts granted to me in this way. It is my fervent hope that I will be found a profitable servant.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Fisher
URCNA Webmaster

Website Utilization

Website utilization continues to grow, not only within but outside the Federation as well. A map of countries from which URCNA.org receives visitors includes every habitable continent; overall, we touch 145 distinct countries throughout the world. Behind only Canada and the United States, the third largest number of website visitors comes to us from China.

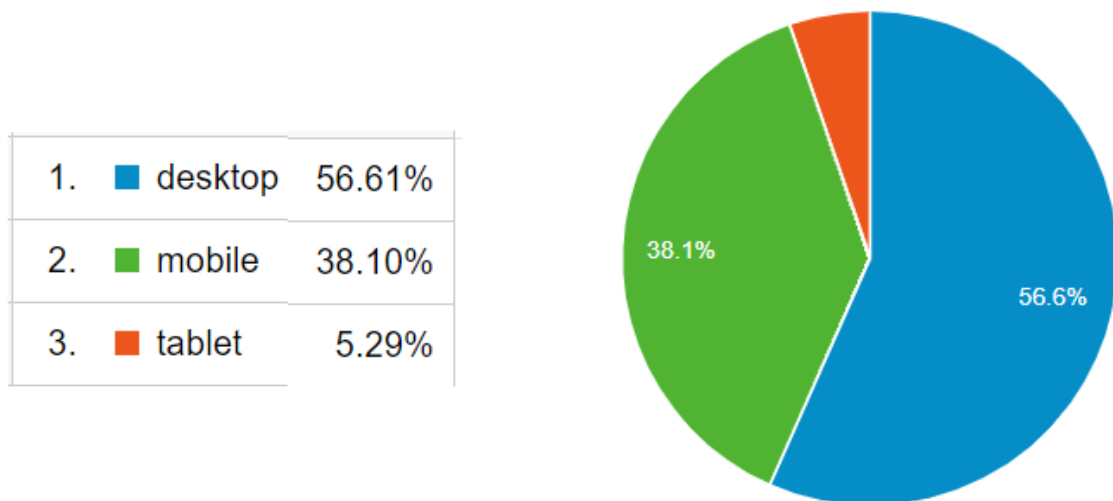


While our largest audience comes from North America, we reach thousands in Asia and almost as many in Europe, about 600 in Africa, and around 500 each in South and Central America, Australia, and the Oceania region. In fact, of the 145 countries we touch, each of the first 19 represents over 100 users, and 57 show visitor figures in two or more digits.

How Users Reach URCNA.org

In the early years of the Federation website, both computer and communications technology in widespread use were quite limited in comparison to now. Computers could display only limited colors, display resolution was often barely capable of presenting readable text, and pages took much longer to load, especially if high-quality photos or graphics were being used, largely due to slow internet connections. For most of us, those restrictions have passed into history and highly interactive websites with engaging graphics, animation, and advanced control technology are common and popular.

Nevertheless, both among our membership and especially in light of our apparent impact around the world, as seen above, we need to maintain a careful balance between aesthetics and usability, keeping the website attractive as a visible aspect of the URCNA, yet still accessible to users who might be using older devices and slower – perhaps even dial-up – internet connections. Here is how people at home and abroad view and use the URCNA website.



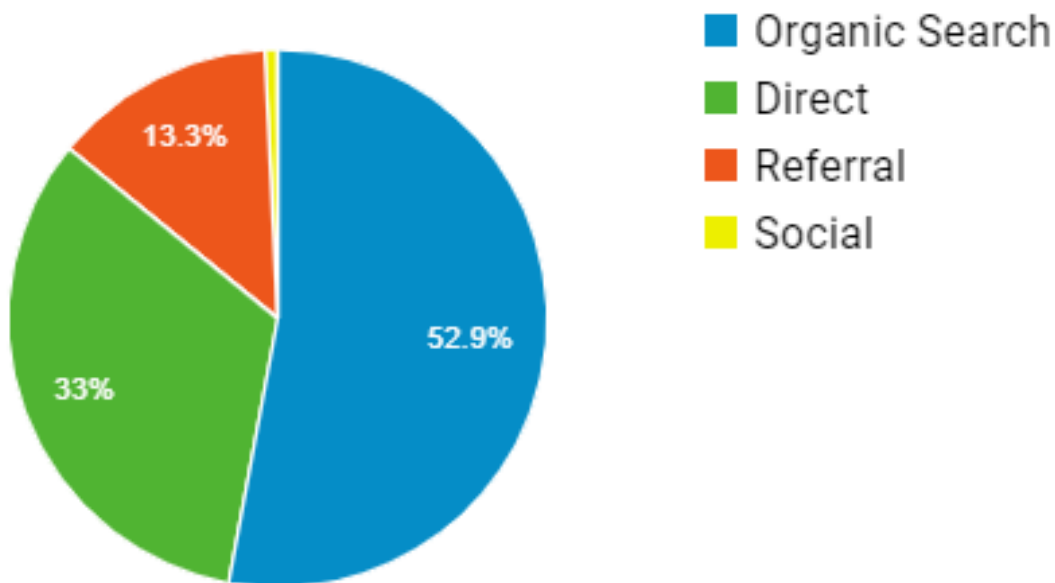
Desktop computers continue to be the most popular device employed by users of URCNA.org, but have dropped by 4.29% since Synod Wheaton 2018. Tablets have also dropped significantly in usage, down by 4.11% since the last Report. The increase, of course, has gone to cell phones, which are now used by well over a third of visitors to the website, up by 8.4% in two years. At least some of this increase may be attributable to enhancements and improvements made both by Service-Life, the company which developed and maintains the Content Management System we

use on the website, and by myself through careful editing and formatting of the URCNA pages, all in recognition of the increasing reliance many people have on their mobile phones.

How Visitors Find URCNA.org

Unlike buildings, books and brochures, a website, no matter how attractive or useful, cannot gain the interest of passers-by. With well over one and three quarter billion websites currently vying for attention on the internet, website usage depends entirely on referrals of one sort or another. It is essential to get and keep a website’s URL (“address”) before any intended audience, or they will simply not know about it.

Top Channels



The chart above shows that the majority of our visitors find us through Google, Yahoo, and other search engines. One key to this is a concept called SEO, Search Engine Optimization, which is a method of informing search engines of important keywords and categories, and of ensuring that content for which users might search is presented and organized in ways “friendly” to the search sites. Virtually every public page on URCNA.org has SEO facilities, and when a page is added, edited, or examined in my periodic checks of the site, I also check and, if necessary, update SEO.

A third of our users simply type “URCNA.org” to reach us; these are people who either already know of us, or who have obtained our “address” from a bulletin, a business card, or other source. The remaining two categories are those who follow a link, either from Social Media – Facebook, Instagram, etc. – or from another website. While many of our churches display a link on their

own websites leading to URCNA.org, a significant number do not; this should be encouraged to highlight our unity and to assist those interested in our churches.

Oversight Consistory of the Website Oversight Committee Report to Synod Redeemer 2020

GRACE United
Reformed
Church

601 Buwalda Dr · Waupun, WI 53963
Ph. (920) 324-2924
pastor@waupungraceurc.org

February 4, 2020

Esteemed brothers,

The Consistory of the Grace United Reformed Church presents this report to synod for our duties as the oversight Consistory for the Website Oversight Committee (WOC).

Our mandate is (Acts of Synod London 2010, article 57, recommendation #14):

- Acting as a legal entity when such is requested by the Website Oversight Committee for the proper fulfillment of the Website Oversight Committee's mandate; the specific actions taken shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.
- Acting as the responsible ecclesiastical assembly, in the time between synods, when such is requested by the Website Oversight Committee for the proper clarification and fulfillment of the Website Oversight Committee's mandate; the specific actions taken shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.

Actions we took were:

- As needed, we paid for various items related to the operation of the website (e.g. domain registration, web forwarding, email hosting, etc.); we submitted these costs for reimbursement by the federation. We had responded to a security risk by Network Solutions (company that hosts our domain name of urnca.org) and changed the account password. At the request of the WOC, we purchased the domain name of urcna.church and forwarded it to urcna.org.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve the Lord of the churches in this capacity. In keeping with synodical rules 3.2, we humbly present the following recommendation for synod:

- **Recommendation #1:** That Synod change the wording of article 4.7.4.o of the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* (concerning postings to the "Recent Ministerial News" section of the website) as indicated below. Additions are in *italics* and deletions are in strikethrough:

Current:

Post the ministerial information received from the consistories of the federation, including the calling of pastors, the answer to this call, availability for call, dissolution of ministerial relationship, the sustaining of ordination and candidacy exams, receiving a

license to exhort, suspension, reinstatement, deposition, emeritation, and the deaths of ministers that take place in our federation.

Proposed:

Post the ministerial information received from the consistories of the federation, including the calling of pastors, the answer to this call, availability for call, dissolution of ministerial relationship, the *scheduling and* sustaining of ordination, and candidacy *and licensure* exams, ~~receiving a license~~ to exhort, suspension, reinstatement, deposition, emeritation, and the deaths of ministers that take place in our federation.

Grounds:

- a. It is useful to announce in advance the *scheduling* of ordination, candidacy and licensure exams, not just their sustaining.
 - b. The new wording is clearer than the old.
 - c. The WOC agrees with the recommendation.
- **Recommendation #2:** That the budget for the WOC no longer be funded from annual Classical 'askings' (currently \$100/USD or \$125CAD) and instead the WOC budget would be a line item in the Synodical budget.

Grounds:

- a. Their budgeting process would become more like the other synodical committees.
- b. This recommendation comes from the WOC and we concur with it, and therefore their request comes as a recommendation from us as well.
- c. Pam Wessels, URCNA Canadian treasurer, agrees with this.

Sincerely, in Christ

Elder Larry Van Den Berg
Clerk

**Liaison Committee to the Presbyterian and Reformed Commission
on Chaplains and Military Personnel (PRCC)
Report to Synod Redeemer 2020**

Esteemed Brothers,

As the URCNA liaison to the PRCC, we present the following brief report.

I. Review of the Committee's Mandate

Synod 2014 adopted the following recommendations:

That Synod appoint the Consistory of Faith URC of Beecher, Illinois, to serve indefinitely without need of re-appointment as the URCNA liaison to the PRCC, and that Synod requests that this Consistory submit reports on the PRCC to future synods.

That Synod authorize the Consistory of Faith URC of Beecher, Illinois, to send one or two observers to PRCC meetings occasionally, at URCNA expense, leaving it to the Consistory's discretion whether and when such observers will be sent. Costs should be set at \$500 USD per annum. (Acts of Synod Visalia 2014, pp. 27-28)

II. Summary of the Committee's Activities

The consistory of Faith URC (Beecher, IL) did not see a need to send an observer to the past two annual PRCC meetings in Atlanta, GA. Minutes for these meetings have been received and reviewed, followed by telephone calls to the PRCC administrator and executive director. We report our observations below.

III. Report on PRCC

A. The Mission of the PRCC

Synod Schererville 2007 voted to apply for affiliate membership in the PRCC (formerly PRJC) because serving as a U.S. Military chaplain requires an endorsement from "a qualified Religious organization." The PRCC's Mission Statement declares,

The Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel is a ministry of member denominations dedicated to obeying Christ's Great Commission by providing men to serve as chaplains in military and civilian organizations. The Commission endorses and ecclesiastically supports ordained, qualified chaplains; approves chaplain candidates; and helps presbyteries and congregations in biblical ministry to military personnel and their families.

The Commission is governed by representatives or *commissioners* from its five member denominations: ARPC, KAPC, OPC, PCA, and RPCNA. It is also the endorsing body for two associate member (non-voting) denominations: KPCA and URCNA. Associate membership in the PRCC is limited to NAPARC denominations.

The Commission oversees the work of its executive director, who is assisted by an administrative assistant and three associate directors. The director not only provides endorsements for qualified men, but, with his associate directors, also supports the chaplains in a variety of ways including retreats and training, visiting and advising, newsletters, and intervention when a chaplain faces conflict.

B. Chaplains Endorsed by the PRCC

The PRCC endorses 305 military chaplains, chaplain candidates, and civilian chaplains. (213 PCA; 32 KAPC; 25 ARPC; 22 OPC; 7 KPCA; 5 RPCNA; 1 URCNA).

A URCNA ministerial candidate is currently processing paperwork with the PRCC with the intent to serve as a chaplain in the Air Force Reserves. The only URCNA chaplain presently endorsed by the PRCC is Rev. Andrew Spriensma, a U.S. Army Chaplain under the oversight of Faith URC (Beecher, IL). He is currently completing a degree in counseling in conjunction with his current assignment at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Chaplain Spriensma is scheduled to report to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri in June, 2020, where he will serve as the Family Life Chaplain to the garrison, responsible for providing pastoral counseling to the military community and training to enhance the counseling skills of the unit chaplains.

He continues to submit three short updates with prayer requests every year for publication in the PRCC's prayer calendar, *The Guardian*. The result is several encouraging emails from some regular prayer warriors when his calendar day comes around. Chaplain Spriensma can be contacted at amspriensma@gmail.com.

C. Gender Confusion

The 2019 PRCC Chaplain's Manual updated chapter 7 in order to broaden the topic from "ministry and homosexuality" to "ministry in a culture of gender confusion." This chapter addresses a wider range of contemporary issues surrounding human sexuality such as gender identity, transgenderism, and same-sex attraction and marriage. The chapter is divided into three parts: affirming the biblical doctrines of human sexuality, providing pastoral guidance, and specific restrictions and expectations.

The doctrinal portion affirms the chaplain's responsibility to remain faithful to the Word of God, ordination vows, and denominational beliefs concerning human sexuality. At no point may PRCC chaplains condone beliefs or behavior that the Word of God condemns. These beliefs are summarized as the dignity of all created in the image of God, the creation of two complementary male and female genders, the institution of marriage as a covenant union between one man and one woman, sin's perversion of human sexuality demonstrated in any intimate physical relationship outside of the covenant of marriage and contrary to God's will, and finally, the power of God and the redemptive work of Christ through the Spirit and the Gospel to find forgiveness, renewal, and transformation from sexual sin.

Pastoral guidance is provided where chaplains are encouraged to provide spiritual counsel and guidance to the servicemember struggling with these sins. Chaplains are to proclaim the whole counsel of God, clearly identifying sin as sin, firmly articulating the truths of God's Word, and yet also powerfully demonstrating Christ's grace and compassion while doing so. Chaplains must follow their conscience and their faith convictions to ensure that these criteria can be met in every unique scenario that they may face.

One of the challenging scenarios in the Army chaplaincy since the removal of the Defense of Marriage Act has been in leading unit-sponsored marriage retreats. In the past, verbal guidance from the former PRCC director was to remove oneself as the instructor if a same-sex couple signed up for the retreat. The current guidance is for the chaplain to determine for himself whether his conscience and faith allow for him to lead the event while maintaining these standards. Some PRCC chaplains have embraced this attitude in an effort to maintain a ministry to the same-sex soldiers and the unit in general. Chaplain Spriensma does not find this position to be personally tenable and his policy remains to remove himself from such a scenario.

The final portion of the chapter reiterates some clear expectations and restrictions for PRCC chaplains in their duties. They will not perform marriage or union ceremonies for same-sex attraction or transgendered service members, nor will they provide marital counseling supporting such. They will not participate in worship services with fellow chaplains who are openly professing homosexuals or transgendered chaplains. Their preaching and teaching will not be censured from addressing these sexual sins. The chaplain must remain in dialogue with their command, their calling denomination, and the PRCC when any conflict of conscience may arise. The PRCC exists in order to aid and protect should these conflicts arise within the military.

D. Dues

The PRCC requires dues from both its endorsed chaplains and also from its member denominations. The denominational dues are \$1000.00 per year. The dues for individual chaplains vary depending on rank. Starting in 2021, a Mission to North America (MNA) service fee will also be assessed to the member denominations. The URCNA assessment is \$138.48 per year. Historically, MNA provided all accounting services free of charge to the sub-ministries within it, but budget constraints will require them to pass on these costs directly to the ministries themselves.

IV. Recommendations

We have only one recommendation: *That Synod set the budget for the PRCC Liaison at \$500 USD per annum to cover the travel costs of attending Commission meetings.*

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Andrew Spriensma
For the Consistory of Faith URC (Beecher, IL)

Standing Committee on Appeals Report to Synod Redeemer 2020

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

Synod Wheaton 2018 appointed the Standing Committee on Appeals and gave it the following mandate:

- a. To receive and review appeals submitted to synod, in advance of synod, in order to organize, summarize, and index relevant documents and data.
- b. To assist the convening consistory of synod concerning the admissibility of appeal submissions.
- c. To make recommendations to the relevant synodical advisory committee concerning the proper and timely handling of particular appeals, without making recommendation concerning the disposition of the appeal (Acts of Synod 2018, Article 64, p. 44).

The Standing Committee on Appeals provides you the following report of our work: As directed by Synod 2018, the representative from Classis Eastern U.S. was appointed as the convener of our first meeting. At that first video conference meeting, we reviewed our mandate and elected Rev. Cal Tuininga to serve as Chairman and Rev. William Godfrey as Secretary. At that time, there were no appeals pending for our committee review.

On December 20, 2019, the Committee held a second video conference meeting to review an appeal that had been submitted for adjudication at Synod 2020. The Committee reviewed the appeal and found it in order and properly indexed.

On March 17, 2020, the Committee held another meeting to review an additional appeal and provided advice to the convening consistory concerning its admissibility. The Committee also reviewed a communication from Classis East that asked our committee to provide advice **to Synod** on Church Order issues related to a pending appeal. However, the Committee found that making such recommendations directly to Synod is beyond our Committee mandate to *“to make recommendations to the relevant synodical advisory committee concerning the proper and timely handling of particular appeals, without making recommendation concerning the disposition of the appeal”* (Acts of Synod 2018, Article 64, p. 44). Finally, the Committee also began formulating the advice that our Standing Committee will provide to the Synodical Advisory Committee on Appeals. That advice will be finalized when the deadlines for appeals has passed and the Committee has reviewed all appeals submitted by that deadline.

In His service,
Rev. Cal Tuininga, Chairman
Rev. William C. Godfrey, Secretary
Rev. Joel Dykstra
Mr. Douglas Field

Mr. Henry Nagtegaal
Rev. James Sinke
Mr. Steven Tjapkes
Mr. Mark Van Der Molen

Canadian Board of Directors for the URCNA Report to Synod Redeemer 2020

Greetings in the name of the Lord.

Whereas in previous years our report addressed specific projects undertaken by the Corporation, during the past two years we have been busy with more regular and mundane work. Most of this work is done by Mrs. Pam Hessels, our Treasurer. Mrs. Hessels is diligent in distributing the funds of the Corporation according to our budget and in alerting the Board to the matters which require being addressed from time to time. We are greatly indebted to Mrs. Hessels and do hereby acknowledge our appreciation for her hard work and thorough service.

Website matters

Our last Synod directed the remaining members of the Liturgical Forms Committee to make our version of the Three Forms of Unity and our Forms and Prayers digitally available. The Canadian URCNA Board assisted in completing that work, using excess funds to pay for the work. However, one outstanding issue of that work is the ongoing cost of maintaining the two websites that were created (threeforms.org and formsandprayers.org).

On the topic of funding our web presence: When our Federation began funding those costs, a share of those costs was assigned to each Classis. While this worked at the outset, it has become an outlier in the way we presently maintain our obligations as a Federation. What is more, the funds for this work are steadily diminishing. For these reasons, we believe a new way of funding this work is needed.

Finally, when we were approached by the Convening Consistory for Synod concerning its plans to develop a website devoted to Synod, we recognized the wisdom in what that Consistory was proposing. However, we recognize also that the Federation must accept the proposed website for future use; therefore, if we adopt this new website for future Synods, we will need to maintain it as well. This website is somewhat unique in that there are increased costs in a Synodical year, and much diminished costs in a non-Synodical year. Spreading these costs over the (typically) two years between Synods seems wise.

Governmental Compliance

The Canadian URCNA Board spends much of its regular (and sometimes tedious) work on navigating the rules and regulations of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). We are convinced that, inasmuch as we are able, we must comply with whatever our government requires of us. This is no easy task: for a couple of reasons. First, the government does not always indicate what compliance actually requires of us in a given situation. Second, because we are not always aware of what the government requires, we sometimes neglect to comply with one or another rule along the way. The latter challenge requires that we regularly review the rules we must adhere to and (when we have forgotten some rule or regulation) to become compliant as quickly as possible.

The former challenge has prompted us to seek counsel either from our lawyer or from Deloitte, the accounting firm which has experts devoted to the unique challenges of charity compliance. Since we are not the only Canadian charity with an international ministry that is struggling to maintain compliance with the CRA we (like many other such organizations) have sought, and continue to seek advice from a multitude of counselors to ensure that we remain within the CRA's requirements.

One of the ways this expressed itself since our last Synod concerns the Mission Committee's proposal to the churches. As the Mission Committee developed its proposal for the churches, we were asked for input and insight into the legalities of its proposal. We met with our Mission Coordinator and the Chairman of the Mission Committee to discuss various proposals and possible arrangements for this work. After discussing possible solutions, we believe that at this time the most effective way to fulfill the Committee's proposal is to maintain two funds, one American and one Canadian, and that each fund support the proposed work in its own country.

Implementing the rules of the CRA for using funds outside of Canada is technically possible, but it is costly and labour intensive. So much so that the requirements greatly outweigh the benefits, not only for our Corporation, but also for all the organizations we would be supporting outside of Canada. Essentially, every organization we would be asked to support outside of Canada would have to come under our "oversight and control".

While this is an oversimplification of what the CRA requires, it is a good place to start when thinking about what is required for Canadian organizations to support work done outside of Canada. We continue to study how we can support causes outside of Canada in a way that is cost effective. However, until we discover the way to accomplish this (or the CRA relaxes its rules for cross-border financial support) we believe it is best to keep matters simple by establishing two independent national funds to accomplish what the Mission Committee is proposing. Whatever proposal or approach to Missions the Federation adopts, we will work closely with those involved to ensure the work is implemented in a way that honours our commitment to the government in addition to our obligations to the churches.

Synod

One of the advantages of having the Wellandport URC convene this Synod is the close connection between its Convening Committee and our Board of Directors. As a result, early in the work of organizing Synod, the Convening Committee contacted our Board and asked that we manage the financial aspects of Synod. After reviewing the way in which previous Synods were funded (and in light of the increasing cost of hosting Synod) we agreed to receive and distribute the funds associated with Synod through our accounts.

We have also adopted a standardized form for reporting the costs of Synod so that the churches have greater clarity on the finances required for this work. All costs associated with organizing Synod Wellandport have been paid by our Board for this Synod. A Synod that is organized outside of Canada can be paid for through the JVA. While we recognize the churches may not want to use this method for managing the costs of Synod, we are willing to continue serving the churches in this way.

Recommendations:

1. That the Federation include the cost of all Websites developed since our last Synod in our yearly budget.
2. That the Federation include the cost of all Websites within the per family “askings” of the Federation and cease collecting these costs via each Classis.
3. That the Federation agree with the proposal of the Canadian Board of Directors that it manage the finances associated with the organizing of Synods convened by URCNA churches in Canada.

United States Board of Directors for the URCNA Report to Synod Redeemer 2020

Dear brothers,

The U.S. Board of Directors has met on three different occasions since Synod 2018. Throughout the last two years, additional meetings have occurred between the URCNA and OPC representatives to the Trinity Psalter Hymnal joint venture. In the last two years, there has been no meeting of the Management Committee created under the Joint Venture Agreement with Canada.

The Annual Reports mandated by the Michigan Department of Labor and Regulatory Affairs have been filed and are current, and the corporation remains in good standing with the State of Michigan.

The financial statements for the corporation were reviewed by the Board and distributed to the churches. The 2018 and 2019 financial statements are in the process of being independently reviewed by Phil Vanden Toorn, CMA, MBA.

Donald Roth was appointed as the alternate Treasurer at the Board's September 29, 2018 meeting.

The Board decided it would be beneficial if the churches were apprised of the activities of the Board on a more regular basis. To this end, approval was sought and obtained from the Convening Consistory to disseminate minutes of the Board meetings to the churches.

During the last two years, Gary Veldink has kept the Board informed of the developments and ongoing operations of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal Joint Venture. We are thankful for the continued work of the OPC/URC joint venture. In addition to retaining sufficient funds for ongoing operations, the Joint Venture has distributed to the U.S. corporation a total of \$146,674.63 (net after payoff of short-term loan), bringing the balance of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal fund to \$155,328.74. As noted in the previously disseminated minutes, the Board seeks direction from Synod as to how this fund should be handled.

It is anticipated that the Trinity Psalter Hymnal Joint Venture Board will provide Synod with more comprehensive reports regarding their work as it pertains to the publication of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal.

Board members Gary Veldink, Robert Huisjen, Eric Brandt and Mark Van Der Molen have asked to step down from the Board at the end of their current term. The Board is grateful for Gary Veldink's leadership as President of the Board for the past six years, especially with the added work undertaken by him with respect to the Trinity Psalter Hymnal. The Board is also

grateful to Robert Huisjen for his many years of faithful service as Treasurer. Board members Donald Roth, Greg VandeKamp and Will Postma are willing to serve another term.

Recommendations:

The U.S. Board of Directors respectfully recommends that Synod take the following actions:

- (1) That Synod appoint seven members to the Board including the three current members willing to continue for another term as well as four new Board members.
- (2) That Synod also appoint one of the Board members as the new U.S. Treasurer. The Board recommends that Synod appoint Dan Barbrick of Trinity URC, Caledonia, Michigan as one of the new Board members and the U.S. Treasurer.
- (3) That Synod give the Board guidance on how to handle the funds held in the Trinity Psalter Hymnal fund.

As the Board of Directors, we are grateful for the opportunity to serve the churches in this respect.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Board of Directors,
Eric Brandt, Secretary

Trinity Psalter Hymnal Joint Venture Board **Report to Synod Redeemer 2020**

In August 2017, the Board of Trustees of the United Reformed Churches in North America (US) entered into a formal Joint Venture Agreement with the OPC's Committee on Christian Education (CCE) regarding the printing and sales of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal (TPH)*. Current members of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* Joint Venture Board (TPHJV Board) are URCNA representatives Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen (president), Rev. Christopher Folkerts, and Mr. Gary Veldink, and OPC representatives Rev. Danny Olinger (manager), Rev. Alan Strange, and Mr. David Winslow. Mr. Joel Pearce, a ruling elder in the OPC, serves as an *ex-officio* member.

As of March, 2020, there have been three printings totaling 58,000 copies of the TPH. The TPHJV Board is planning a fourth printing for mid-2020. Combined sales for TPH products have totaled 54,824.

| | |
|--------|--------|
| URCNA | 23,926 |
| OPC | 16,789 |
| PCA | 4,781 |
| ARP | 728 |
| Others | 8,600 |
| Total | 54,824 |

In November, 2019, the TPHJV Board approved that an additional \$75,000 be returned to each partner federation making the total returned to each partner \$245,000. In January, 2020, the Board had \$339,333 in funds reserved for future printings, royalties, and digital development.

The reception of the TPH has been overwhelmingly positive throughout the URCNA and the OPC. It is evident that the Lord has greatly blessed the singing repertoire of our churches through this publication.

Great Commission Publications is ably handling the sales, distribution, and accounting of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* and reports monthly to the Board.

In 2018 the TPHJV Board appointed Mr. Joel Pearce as the Digital Executive Director of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. Under Mr. Pearce's leadership, the Board launched the TPH website, www.trinitypsalterhymnal.org. Since its launch in June 2019, more than 7,500 visits and nearly 20,000 page views have taken place. The TPH was also indexed by www.hymnary.org in 2019, and our songs are typically the first default result on the text authority pages.

Also during 2019 three digital editions of the TPH were made available for sale on the website:

1. **The Locked PDF edition** is meant for personal use on a computer or tablet and is read-only. Since its initial release, we have incorporated several updates including links to songs from the Title and First Line Index.

2. **The Unlocked PDF edition** is meant for church and organizational use, to assist in reproduction. This edition is especially helpful for small churches that may not be able to afford many copies of the printed pew edition. Included in the purchase of the Unlocked PDF are reproduction permissions for all OPC/URCNA copyrighted songs. Third party copyrights still require permissions from copyright administrators.

3. **The Projection edition** is meant for churches that project their music on a large screen.

The TPHJV Board anticipates that a TPH **Mobile App** edition will be available in 2020. Development is currently underway for both Apple and Android operating systems. Musicologist Dr. Timothy Shafer has agreed to record the tunes from the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* for inclusion in the Mobile App editions and on the website.

Text only **Large Print** and **Braille** editions are also available free of charge to churches that have purchased pew editions of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. To request these editions, go to www.trinitypsalterhymnal.org and navigate to the “Where to Buy” page where you will find a link to request the electronic files for Large Print and Braille editions.

Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen (Chairman)

Rev. Christopher Folkerts

Mr. Gary Veldink (President of the URC Board of Trustees – US)